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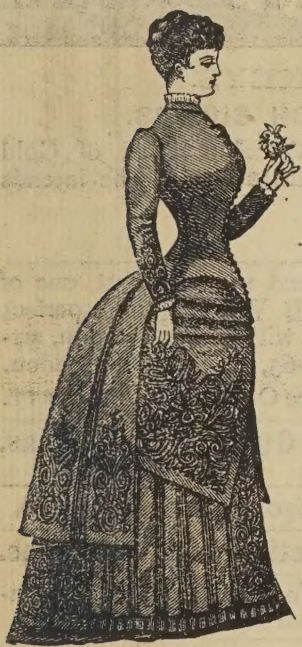

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A NOVEL

BY

HAIN FRISWELL

A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1884

James Hain Friswell (1824-1878) was born at Newport, Shropshire. His father was a London solicitor. He was a novelist and miscellaneous writer, a popular lecturer, and took an interest in the working classes.

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PREFACE.

To one of Mr Thackeray's stories—which is so English, that no one would have the slightest suspicion that it was a transplantation—the author appends a note, explaining that the plot came from a foreign source. In a like manner, the writer of the following pages would acknowledge his indebtedness to M. Emile Gaboriau for the *motiff* of this story, and for outlines of some of the principal characters. He hopes, however, that as his "scene," to speak dramatically, is as thoroughly English as that of the "Bedford Row Conspiracy," referred to above, so also the puppets which move and speak upon his stage—many of which appear for the first time—may be claimed as original, and entirely of our country; while the "time" of the story is more than forty years anterior to the date of that which suggested it.

Exigencies of narration have made the author take a slight liberty with the Criminal Law, which his good-natured readers will, he hopes, be as ready to pardon as he is to confess his necessary shortcoming; he also begs to be permitted to explain that the quotations from the newspapers are from contemporary sources.

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ONE OF TWO.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WAS FOUND AT ACACIA VILLA, KENSAL-GREEN.

On Friday, the 3rd day of October, in the year 1829, being a few days after Michaelmas Day, which in that year fell on a Tuesday, an old man, a tall boy, and three women, took the trouble to walk all the way from Kensal-Green—a pretty village not far from London, and not then disfigured by that huge stonemasons' yard, the Cemetery—and to present themselves at the door of the police-office in Marylebone, or, as they called it, "Marrybone Lane."

Having been allowed to enter, and having wondered at the place, which was quite new, as well as the New Police—who had only been put on duty four or five days previously—the spokeswoman of the party endeavoured to tell her tale; when Mr Inspector—who, in his new blue coat and pewter buttons, looked very like an officer of his Majesty's land forces—interrupted her, and pointing to the male person, begged *him* to say what was wanted. Whereon Mr Jasper Snape, tailor and pigeon-fancier, began. This was his narrative :—

For several days the neighbourhood of Kensal-Green—that is to say, Jasper Snape himself and his neighbours—had been troubled and exercised by the fact that a certain widow, Mrs Martin, or, as she was usually called, "Madame," had not been visible to mortal eye. She was Snape's neighbour, and lived in a little house, standing alone in its own garden. She used to admire his, Jasper Snape's, pigeons. He bred pigeons, besides earning his living by tailoring. He had been to her house lately—that is to say, to-day, Friday—with these good people; he had knocked several times: there was no answer.

Both windows and doors were shut: the windows by shutters, which were, of course, fastened on the inside. Had knocked at all the shutters.

The tall boy had peeped through the keyhole, and even offered to climb up on the roof, and to get down the chimney. It was a low house, not low in a bad meaning, on the contrary, very genteel; but of one story, so it would have been easy to have carried out the tall boy's proposal; but he, Jasper Snape, had told them that it was "agen the law," and they had come up all that way for a search warrant.

"Perhaps," said the Inspector, "the woman's gone out on a visit."

Mr Jasper Snape here smoothed his hair, and pulled at his waistcoat, as if he were about to take a new thread off his neck, and thread his needle again. He recommenced:—

You should understand him, Snape, no; decidedly, no! He knew the value of law, and did not want to trouble it. Madame—that is, the widow—had been seen to go *in*, but *not* to come out. She had been seen, that is to say, on Michaelmas Day. Her rent was paid: she was a particular person in paying rent. She and Snape inhabited houses belonging to the same landlord; in fact, he paid her rent two or three days before it was due. She then shut her door—after being last seen on Tuesday evening, at about six—and said she should go to bed. He had heard her close her shutters.

The woman had seen those shutters closed; the tall boy could corroborate all that had been said.

The Inspector rubbed his chin, flicked his pen, and looked at the charge sheet.

"Why did you come up here? Was there not the proper head-constable up at that place?"

"It was not very far," said Snape; "and the new Act—Bobby Peel's New Police Act—had commenced. The Charleys, very useful men in their time, had gone out, and we wanted new brooms."

Snape—who, being a tailor and keeping pigeons, must needs be a politician and an admirer of Major Cartwright—intimated that, upon the whole, he approved of the Act.

"There was," he said, "a blessed deal too much of Tom and

Jerry larking with the old Charleys. An old friend of his, a Charley, had been put into the canal close by, box—*i.e.*, watch-box—and all; and as near as could be drownded—*dead!*"

"You won't have no more of them larks now," said the Inspector, sternly, to Snape.

He was angry that the majesty of the law should be so dealt with; and he was puzzled what to do with the case which Snape and Company had brought him.

Presently, while the tall boy was vainly looking through the rails of the Inspector's desk, a gentlemanly man, about thirty, came in, and passed through to the court. The Inspector, struck with a sudden thought, jumped off his stool and followed him.

"Mr Boom sits to-day, sir," he said.

"Umph!" said Mr George Horton, stipendiary magistrate. "I know that, Stevenson; but I want to refer to some cases. Anything new—it all works smoothly?"

"Ye—es," said the Inspector; "very smoothly, sir. But here's a curious case I want to know about, sir."

And he followed the magistrate into the private room, and read over Mr Jasper Snape's communication. After a while, the young magistrate said that he would not only grant the warrant, but go with Stevenson, if he could put another inspector on duty. Yes, he would go with the Inspector and a plain-clothesman—whom, indeed, we should now call a detective—and see about the matter.

"Something strikes me that it is a serious matter, Stevenson."

"Yes, sir," said that officer, sharply enough. When the chance of a "case" turned up, most "officers" were on the alert, for the honour of the new corps was dear to them. "Here are these people, sir. What am I to do with them?"

"How many?" asked the magistrate.

Stevenson went to the door and counted.

"One, two, three—five, sir," he said.

"Get a cab to the door for you and me, and a hackney coach for the witnesses and the plain-clothesman."

"Yes, sir."

And away the Inspector creaked.

"Stevenson!" shouted Mr Horton.

"Yes, sir."

"They have come all the way from Kensal-Green. Give them some beer; here 's the money."

He threw the Inspector half-a-crown, and the latter caught it, murmuring, "My eye and Betty Martin!"—a favourite oath of the period—"recently appointed, arn't he? New to the business!"

Kensal-Green was a pretty little village, made all the prettier by the new canal which ran through it and through hundreds of acres of hay-fields round it. It was quiet, perfectly countrified or rural, more so than many a village now-a-days which lies near a railway, and celebrated as a health-resort. Very small people, who had made very small sums of money, came and lived there, cultivating small patches of ground and humble memories, and living in a state of perfect and Paradisaical innocence, but for the swearing of the bargees who navigated the canal. These fellows were more lively than ever they are now, doing, indeed, a brisker trade as carriers, and quite frightening some of the people out of their tenements; so that it resulted that all the better houses were built at some distance from the canal. Otherwise, the neighbourhood was bright and pretty enough. At a short distance lay the Edgware Road; and along that the coaches from the North used to run several times a-day into the Oxford Road, and thence to Holborn.

The yellow-bodied cab, with the police magistrate and the Inspector seated side by side under a huge black leather hood, and driven by a driver with a sleeve-waistcoat and a black eye, who sat by their side in a separate box or compartment, soon got to the cross-roads on the Green; for the bay mare with the cock-tail in the shafts was a good one, and had been a racer. Upon the Green the cab awaited the hackney coach, which came up with smoking horses; for the yellow-bodied cab, with its tall wheels and light fare, had "cut along pretty sharply," as the Inspector said.

"Now, then, old slow coach!" said the driver with the black eye.

"D'yer want me to break their wind?" said the coachman, angrily.

"You couldn't, if so be you tried; it 's done a'ready," returned the other.

During this passage of arms, Snape and Company descended. The tailor, leading the way, and followed by the stipendiary magistrate and police, the tall boy, the women, and a few children, also by the cabman with the black eye, turned to the right hand of the Green, to a little side road, and in a few minutes gained a pretty little box of a villa, which, with all its shutters shut in the broad daylight, looked as if it had gone to sleep. A light ornamental railing ran in front of the house, and dwarf walls divided it from others, one only of which, and that uninhabited, stood beyond it. The little villa had a ground floor and a first floor, and altogether did not number more than six small rooms and a wash-house. Somehow, as the people approached it, they shuddered and felt dull, the house looked so deserted and so tightly closed.

"Yes," said Jasper Snape; "that 's the place—look at it!"

The magistrate, placing a policeman at the little fore-garden gate, and taking the Inspector and Snape with him, knocked with his silver-headed cane at both door and shutters. There was no answer.

"Ay, you may knock," said one of the women to the other. "*You* won't get no answer; *she 'll* never open that door agin."

Mr Horton turned round, and said to the policeman at the door—who was regarded in that rural district almost with awe, as a powerful and antagonistic novelty—

"Send for a locksmith."

A young fellow with a rush basket on his shoulders hereon stepped forward. Carefully dusting the stone doorstep with his white apron, he knelt down, took his rush basket off his shoulders, shook the door, tried to look through the keyhole, and then selecting a fine picklock of much power, placed it in the lock. The door opened easily, and the little party entered. There was an eager movement from the crowd without; the women pressed closer together, the children even dared to push the policeman in their eagerness to get in at the gate.

Mr Jasper Snape's worst anticipations were too well founded. The very passage, which was small enough, exhibited to the excited senses of the searchers something indicative of the

coming revelation. The mat had been kicked up ; the kitchen candle, which had burned itself out in its tin candlestick, had flared and guttered down with a brown-red grease that looked almost like blood. On the left-hand side was the "drawing-room" of the little villa. In it was a desk, broken open, and the drawer wrenched out, bending the thin brass pin which fastened it. Papers were scattered about ; and an Indian shawl of some little value, thin and filmy, which had lain in the bottom of a work-box, was thrown on the sofa, the work-box upset on the top of it, and the pocket of the work-box was torn open.

"Whoever he was," said the plain-clothesman, "this cracksman was in a hurry."

In the next room, the door of which faced the other, the same hurry was observed. Some cold meat and an egg were put for some one to eat ; a bottle, with the cork out, of brandy stood near it : the brandy was of that dark, mahogany colour, then fashionable ; but by its side there was something not then found in small houses, a bottle of claret. The cloth, laid carefully, very white and good, was pulled on one side towards the door, as if some person had suddenly risen. A napkin and a napkin ring, unused, but with some stains upon it, lay upon the floor. The stains were of blood. The little sideboard had been forced open ; but the thief had forgotten to take two or three silver tea-spoons, the only plate there.

"He 's a rum cracksman," said the detective, "and not a very old hand."

Mr Brownjohn, who ventured that opinion, *was* an old hand himself, drafted from Bow Street into the New Police, and was celebrated in his way.

Neither Mr Horton nor the Inspector—both men of more reflection than Brownjohn, who owed his reputation to instinct, or to happy guesses—said anything. Either the owner had been very careless, which might have been the case, or the guilty person had, in an eager search, moved nearly every article.

Through the dining-room a door led into the neat little kitchen, which was merely sufficient to prepare food for an old, or a very young couple in their honeymoon ; and, indeed, the

little Cockney village was much resorted to by humble young people who had just married.

After looking round the dining-room, the magistrate, closely followed by Jasper Snape, entered the kitchen. The latter no sooner had put his head in the little room, than he gave a cry, and rushed forward.

"There she is!—there! there! Poor Mrs Martin! Poor Madame!"

The old pigeon-fancier knelt down by the side of the corpse; and there, sure enough, the head lying in the cinders, was the body of the Widow Martin. Part of the cap and part of the hair were burnt. Curiously, the water of the kettle had been spilt in the struggle or attack, and had flowed over the body and extinguished the flames. It was probable that the murderer would have been well pleased had the body been burnt, and all evidence of the crime thus destroyed.

"Where has the poor woman been wounded?" said the magistrate.

"In the back, between the shoulders, twice," said the Inspector, turning back the shawl. "A small hole enough the weapon left, but 'tis enough."

"She is quite cold," said Snape, in a whisper, as if he dared not speak aloud.

"Been dead at least three days," said the Inspector. "What blood there is, is dry. She must have bled inwardly. One blow went through the heart. I should think she had not time to cry out 'Oh!'"

"Poor creature!" ejaculated Mr Horton, in deep pity and disgust. "Could not the villains have robbed the house without murdering her? Pass the word for a doctor. Stevenson, take an inventory of the matters here. Mr Snape, come with me into the next room; and, while we wait here, tell me who was this woman?"

Mr Snape followed the magistrate, who sat down in the deserted drawing-room. The Inspector passed the word for a doctor; and, in some mysterious way, all the people outside seemed to have been made acquainted with the facts inside. The constable of the village came up and took the place of the policeman at the gate; and that functionary in blue was sent

back in the yellow-bodied cab to Homer Street, New Road, for a more efficient aid; for the Inspector looked with a jealous, as well as a supercilious eye upon the plain-clothesman, Brownjohn.

"There 's no time to lose," said he. "Brownjohn is flummoxed quite. We shall want Old Daylight here."

And so having determined, the cabman in the sleeve-jacket, and with a black eye, having seen his blue-coated fare in his swing cabriolet, was despatched to Homer Street at a fast trot.

"Why do you send for Old Daylight?" said the policeman, sulkily. "It 's plain enough this ain't no professional cracksman. It 's some fellow as has been suddenly took. He 's got a good start, but I 'll have him."

"There 's more in it than you think for, Brownjohn," said the Inspector, severely. "Tom Forster 's the only man for delicate work like this."

Tom Forster was the proper name of Old Daylight.

The plain-clothesman stood rebuked and sulky; and, in the little kitchen, such was the silence that they heard the clear voice of Mr Horton ask Snape the question—

"Who was this woman?"

CHAPTER II.

MR TOM FORSTER PUTS HIMSELF ON THE QUI VIVE.

WHAT Mr Jasper Snape, tailor and bird-fancier, could not tell the magistrate, Mr Horton contrived to gather from the neighbours, while the yellow-bodied cab went literally at a swinging trot for Old Daylight; and Inspector Stevenson was at once pleased and delighted with the clear, concise, and efficient way in which the magistrate went through his examinations. Indeed, it was not to be wondered at. Mr George Horton was a rising barrister of great promise, and many of his friends thought that he was unwise to accept the thousand a-year of the stipendiary magistrateship. But his reason will have to be explained. In the meantime, let us tell the reader who Mrs Martin was.

In 1827, about two years before this, Madame Martin had arrived at the little village in a hackney coach, full of linen and crockery, had driven right up to Acacia Villa—both the acacia, from which it took its name, and the villa were very small—had produced a key, and had entered the house, which had been previously very neatly furnished with the contents of one van. She was a yearly tenant—the landlords at Kensal-Green, for their own reasons, preferring their rents paid quarterly, and in advance.

Mrs Martin was what is called a bony woman, and in youth was certainly bonny too. She was upwards of fifty years old, strong, vigorous, and in full health. She spoke English with a very slight accent, for she was a native of Trouville, near Boulogne, and had been brought up in an English family; but she was altogether French in look, manner, and feeling. She had lived much in the world, and was of that age when a lone woman takes upon herself much of the independence and roughness of man. She walked about the Green, made her purchases, hired her little servant—who came for two days in the week, and never slept in the house—and was beholden to nobody, except to Jasper Snape, who went and paid her rent for her, and whose pigeons she admired. She herself had kept pigeons at a small château in the little valley of Trouville.

With those whom she met she was very free spoken. She had been a voyage or two, and even farther than from Boulogne to Dover; and she knew something about the sea. In her drawing-room was a handsome Japanese cabinet, a great deal too good for so small a house, but one of those things which seafaring people get hold of, and present to those whom they love. She said that her husband, a Boulognese, was dead—he had been lost at sea—and a good job too! It was a pity some people ever married. When two young people, who were very fond of each other, settled not far from her, and were seen walking fondly together, she had been heard to say—

"Ah! all very well—new brooms! new brooms! Fresh and fair, no doubt. He 'll care for her about a year, that 's all."

From which he, Jasper Snape, believed that she was not happily married.

Mrs Martin, called Madame, was looked upon as a rich woman—for the Green. She always paid her rent, was generous to her little servant, ate well, slept well, and drank well. It came out that her female neighbours knew how many bottles of brandy she got from the Stanley Arms, on the Green ; and the Kilburn carrier had driven out of his way to deliver a wooden box full of wine—probably, thought Mr Horton, a case of claret. Once even the canal men had brought something to her ; and one of them had been admitted, and treated to some brandy and water, which he said was " prime."

" Put that down, Inspector—it 's important."

The plain-clothesman pricked his ears.

Mrs Martin had, it would seem, the best of everything ; and, as a rule, was evidently not liked in the neighbourhood by any, save by Jasper Snape. She had said several rude things to the women. To one young girl she hinted that, " With her beautiful face, she would make her fortune in Paris or London ;" and women do not love such phrases. Moreover, Mrs Martin lived, as Dr Johnson said a gentleman did, " with no visible means of gaining an honest existence ;" and she lived better than her neighbours. They were, consequently, jealous ; and even her terrible death did not seem to evoke any pity, except in the breasts of Mr Horton and Jasper Snape. Yet, there she lay, killed in full health and vigour, still as straight and vigorous as a young woman. That keen eye was closed ; that bold hawk-look for ever blank ; that quick, determined step would never march out of that door again. Besides the matter of offence which the immense vigour and *aplomb* of Madame gave, there were many other reasons why she was disliked. She was always sneering at virtue, at romance, at the English, and at the Protestant religion. The parson could make nothing of her. She went, it is supposed, once or twice—on festival days, Easter Sunday and Christmas Day—to Spanish Place to mass ; but that was all—*if* that. Her daily habit was to eat and drink a good deal, although she was spare of body, and very far from fat ; and to retire early, shutting herself closely up, and bolting all her doors and windows. Ill-natured people said that before she went to bed she had taken enough of brown brandy.

At this stage of the evidence—gathered from various people painfully, by question and answer, and bit by bit—the constable at the gate signified that the yellow-bodied cab was in sight; and presently it dashed up, and from it descended the policeman in blue, and a quiet little man in brown.

Mr Thomas Forster—for it was he—stepped down carefully from the cab, and walked circumspectly into the garden. He had been found at home, of course; and found, as he would have been at any time, neatly dressed in the fashion of perhaps twenty years previous. A brown spencer covered a brown coat; but both were open, and showed a neat black kerseymere waistcoat, double-breasted, and with flaps; under this, brown pantaloons, tight-fitting to the knee, were terminated by Hessian boots, fashionably made, but with leather tassels tightly sewn to the top, like a bunch of fringe. A thick white cravat, neatly tied round the old gentleman's neck, completed his costume, if you except a rakish and smart-looking beaver hat, curled at the sides. From his fob, under his waistcoat, hung a gold watch chain, of a copper colour, and a heavy flat link, almost as broad as a riband; at the end of this was a somewhat round but excellent silver watch of the best London make, and upon this our friend placed implicit reliance. His hands were covered with good Woodstock gloves, and in them he held an old favourite blackthorn, very polished and nobby at the top. Mr Tom Forster, in spite of his littleness, looked a substantial person. He was not exactly a gentleman; he looked more like a well-to-do innkeeper or householder. He was utterly unlike a tradesman of the period, and stood stoutly in his shoes. He was well known to Sir Richard Birnie, and the officers of Bow Street; for in many a celebrated raid had he helped them. Latterly, he had separated himself from the office, having had money left him; but when any great case offered itself, Old Daylight—as they called him, because he was supposed to let daylight into the darkest cases—was perfectly ready.

He bowed with much respect to the magistrate—for Tom Forster loved and honoured forensic genius, and Mr George Horton was well known to him as one of the keenest cross-examiners that ever said "My lud"—and then, taking off his

gloves, he sat down, the plain-clothesman looking at him with jealousy.

For Mr Brownjohn—afterwards so celebrated in the annals of our detective police, and who, indeed, died from a wound got in a fray with some desperadoes—had been cruelly hurt by the Inspector. He knew his weight, and had with good cause been highly recommended when "turned over" from the chief office to Marylebone. Give him a clue, and he would follow it out to the last. He had not that clue yet. He would soon have it. Why, he argued, call in Old Daylight? But never mind, it would be a race between them yet; and he would bet twenty to twenty that he was even with Daylight.

Old Daylight's method was altogether different from that of Brownjohn. He was a natural philosopher; and, naturally so, on the inductive principle. He put together piece after piece of evidence; and, when he had amassed a huge heap, he gave a sudden jump. "Great wits jump" was a quotation that he had never heard, but which he had often proved true. Little by little the light given by each fact accumulated, until he saw his way clear, and then nothing could shake him. Many a time he had persisted in the truth of his deduction, though everybody was against him; and many a time he had been right. Hence his great reputation. For delicate cases, neither the celebrated Leadbetter, nor the more celebrated Forrester, who were the heroes of a hundred stories, could compare with Tom Forster.

The Inspector himself was no fool. He had been a constable when the New Police were only dreamt of, and he meant to be an honour to the New Police. He had a prodigious memory for faces. Whenever he looked upon a man for two or three minutes—and he looked upon many—he never forgot him. Something, he said, in the play of the eye was different in every man, and upon the eye he depended; hence he never pretended to recognise or recall dead people more than another man; but a living man he was down on. He, too, hoped to pick something out of this case; but *his* method was, he saw, scarcely wanted here, and he had made up his mind that the job was for Tom Forster.

Mr Forster, saluting the magistrate, took off his hat, and

showed a bald head, covered at the back and sides with thick iron-grey hair. His eyes were dark hazel, twinkling and merry enough, and very sharp. His back was bent, and his head held forward eagerly. He produced a gold eyeglass, put it to one eye, and perused the magistrate's notes. He did not take a minute to run over them; then he rose, went into the kitchen, and came back again, saying—

"Very good—very good."

What he said was not applied to the murder, but to the notes. Then, turning to Mr Horton, he said—

"Your worship has not designated the time when the woman Martin was last seen."

Mr Horton placed his hand on the paper, and with his finger pointed out that which Old Daylight had overlooked. At the side—covered by his thumb, probably, when he read it—were the figures, "twenty minutes past six in the evening."

"On Michaelmas Day. She must have gone to rest early."

"Her habit," said Mr Horton.

"You are sure of the time?"

"Exactly. Here is the witness, Smith, who had bought a goose for her dinner, and who went to fetch a little gin from the public-house for her husband's digestion. The Stanley Arms is about five minutes' slow walk from this little Acacia Villa. Smith, coming home, saw Mrs Martin standing at her door, who told her that French brandy—cognac—was better to drink than English gin."

"That depends," said Old Daylight; "both good in their way. Felix Booth can give you gin not to be sneered at. However, that settles the time."

"Mrs Smith," continued the magistrate, "saw her go in, and heard her lock her door, and then open her windows to pull-to her shutters."

"Did she say anything else—Mrs Smith?" said Old Daylight.

"That she had a headache, and would go to bed."

"Was there any one seen with her at any time?" asked the magistrate.

The woman recollected that, two days before, a sea-faring man, who had appeared to be very much amused by the canal

boats, had come up there, and had gone in, and stayed some time. He was grey, very like an Englishman, but might have been a foreigner: he had ear-rings.

Here Mr Brownjohn, who was listening, let his eyes gleam a little bit. He saw the kind of man, and had his clue.

"That's the rascal!" thought he.

"Does any one else recollect this man?" asked Mr Horton.

Here the tall boy was hustled forward. He did. He was a very nice old fellow—quite a foreigner. Perhaps a Dutchman. He had read that Dutchmen were short and stout. Had heard him speak. Asked for the house of "Meestress Marton;" and when he, the tall boy, had shown it him, had given him threepence. The boy had thanked him, and given the money to his mother.

Mr Horton noticed this in his neat abbreviations. Old Daylight rubbed his chin, dissatisfied, and then scratched his eyebrow. The Inspector asked what kind of eyes the man had.

"Fair blue eyes—very good-natured," said the tall boy.

The Inspector turned over all the rogues that he knew with fair blue eyes.

"It's a case," he said, "for the Thames constables."

Mr Brownjohn came forward and fixed an awful gaze upon the tall boy.

"Now, you know," said he, with a deferential bow to the magistrate—"you know, my young friend, that we shall get it all out of you."

The boy turned very red.

The policeman went on.

"We shall get it all out of you. We know that something more must have passed. Freshen your memory a bit, Jacob, and speak up to the magistrate."

The boy paused, felt awful, and then looked at Mr Horton.

"Tell all, my boy," said the gentleman, kindly. "We must know. Did he use any threatening words? Was that all he said and did?"

It was not all. The boy confessed the sea-faring man had given him sixpence in halfpence or coppers, not threepence. He had spent half of it in sweetstuff and marbles; and then, cowering like a guilty thing, the tall boy was silent.

All the men, as well as Mr Horton, saw that the clue broke there.

"It 's that sailor chap, for a quid," said Brownjohn to himself.

"Marbles and sweetstuff!" muttered Tom Forster. "Poor human natur'!"

Then he rose, and walked into the kitchen. He had learned all he could. Now he would begin to work for himself.

"'Tisn't that sailor man!" he muttered, as he looked at the body. "Sailors use knives or ropes! Well, well—these things must happen. How to find who did it, and why they—or he—did it? Was it a he?"

All he could be certain of, at present, was that it was *one of two.*

CHAPTER III.

CABINET-WORK; OR, PIECING TOGETHER.

Mr Samuel Brownjohn, who had so hurt the tall boy's feelings by eliciting the fact that he had secreted threepence, and expended the same in sweetstuff, still cast an eye of desire after the evidence of that boy.

"He 's an innocent young chuff," said he to himself; "but I warrant he 's seen more of that Dutch sailor. Boys like him don't let a seafarin' man alone for nothin'."

So saying, while Mr Horton was covering his handsome face and forehead with his hands, and thinking how crime could have entered that peaceful little village, Brownjohn stole out, and followed the boy. All that he got from him, after a long time, and the promise of another sixpence, was that the Dutchman had got upon one of the barges; but he did not know whether it—the barge—went northward or southward.

"To London, may be," said Brownjohn; "that way"—and he pointed in that direction.

The tall boy couldn't say. He knew the stem from the stern, but didn't know which way the barge went. No, he wasn't a fool, and he knew how to read. There were two

barges: one lay with her head to London, t'other with her head up the canal. There was a slight bulge in the canal thereabouts, and they lay on the opposite side to the towing-path. The Dutchman seemed very friendly with the bargeman, and was laughing when his head disappeared in the little cabin. Thereon the clue, which Brownjohn held so tightly, again broke. He was more and more certain about that Dutchman; but he did not want to go to Birmingham if his prey were hiding in London. Such a fellow as he was would of course go southward, and Brownjohn would have gone southward too, if his wit had "jumped." But no, he never did *that;* he held fast by the clue, and he never found it to fail. Away, therefore, he trotted to the Stanley Arms, and, disguising his purpose, had a long talk with the landlord. He learnt from that gentleman a good deal about Mrs Martin, who, the landlord thought, had killed herself, and had "tumbled about the things" on purpose, to put it upon the Green. The Green would now be in all the London papers. It would be as bad as Mr Weare's murder by Thurtell, out at Edgware there, near Mill Hill Farm. Mrs Martin was a good customer to him, but he did not care for that. She was a designing woman.

"Poor creetur!" said Mr Brownjohn. "She couldn't have no design in her own death."

Landlord didn't know about that. Women *were* so artful—devilish artful; deep, very deep.

Brownjohn said they were. There was no "understanding of 'em."

Like foxes run to earth in a loamy country, with lots of old banks, there was no digging them out. Hadn't he neat wines, he should like to know? What did Mrs Martin want to set an example to the neighbourhood by having cases of wine by the carrier? A bad example was what he couldn't abide; leastways, when it was set by a furriner.

"I'd ha' thought," said Mr Brownjohn, "that she would have used the canal now."

He was on to his clue again. Brownjohn was a rare fellow to stick to it, he was. He was not unsuccessful this time, for by little and little he wormed out of the landlord what he

wanted; and with his head up, away went the New Police officer towards Acacia Villa.

In the meantime, Old Daylight had been to work in his own way. Down on his knees in the little kitchen, searching in the grate, raking over the ashes, out in the garden measuring the footsteps found in the little bed under the window, up in the dead woman's bed-room, tasting the brandy, scrutinising the claret, and taking notes of everything—the busy little man worked away like some of the new invented steam-engines people were then wondering at.

Mr Horton, during all this time, had several fits of impatience. The day was wearing away; the yellow-bodied cab would claim a vast amount of money for waiting; and, absorbed as he was in the case, he (Mr Horton) wanted to put himself in communication with the Home Secretary about this mysterious crime.

However, just as Mr Brownjohn came in, and was telling the magistrate that he held the clue tighter than ever, Old Daylight entered, looking twenty years younger, and bearing in his hands a little thin drawer, carefully covered with a white pocket handkerchief.

"I'm after him," said Brownjohn. "I'm off now to the Thames Police Court. I think they have some of the old water dogs about there yet. You shall hear from me in two or three days, sir; it may be from Dover, or from Rochester, or thereaway down the river."

"You're pretty sure, then, Brownjohn?" said the magistrate.

"Sure!—no," answered the detective. "*I* never holler till *I'm* out of the wood; other people may. But I'll do my best; and man, woman, or child can't do more. Good-bye. Going to take the cab back, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr Horton.

"All right, then; I'll foot it across the fields. No time to be lost, I can tell you. Hallo, there!"

Here he ran to the door, and shouted to a carrier's cart, and was seen in a minute to climb up, and seat himself by the driver.

"He's off," said Inspector Stevenson; and here he deter-

mined to be generous to an absent friend. "A better man than Sam Brownjohn, in certain points, don't serve his Majesty."

Mr Tom Forster next, dusting his dirty hands, and rubbing his bald head with a bandana of fine colours—red, yellow, and green—artfully mixed by the Easterns for the English market.

"Now, Mr Forster," said the magistrate, "get on with this. We must not waste time."

"Not a moment has been lost," said Mr Forster, with a certain pride in his voice. "The more haste the less speed. A very pretty case—a very pretty case, indeed! Poor human natur'! I often wonder at her, sir. She's wonderful—wonderful, indeed! But we grow up to her dodges. Poor human natur'!"

As he said the last words, he twitched the handkerchief off the drawer in a very careful manner, as if there were bank notes underneath, and he did not want to flirt them away. There were things that to him, at the moment, were more precious than bank notes—ay, if there were fifty of them, each of fifty pounds value. The little old man loved his profession, and his heart and soul were in it.

"Crime," said he, sententiously, "crime is puzzling; yet we find the ends of the puzzle. It is *not* motiveless. However silly the motive may appear, still, at the bottom of that folly, some faint reason may be found. Poor human natur'! I sometimes doubt whether any single action in life is without a motive!"

The magistrate looked up at the queer little old man, who spoke so wisely, so sadly, and so selfishly, and with a very different intonation from that ordinarily employed by him. Old Daylight, as he said this, had an educated voice. Voices are "educated," if you please, my masters. It was not the Bow Street runner, it was the philosopher who was speaking.

"And what was the motive of this crime?" asked the magistrate.

"Not money," said Tom Forster, "to a dead certainty; though that's at the bottom of most crimes. Here are a few details:—This murder was committed at about half-past nine

o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, the 29th September—that is, last month."

"Why so?"

"Because candles were lighted, and supper was spread. It was dark, and yet not too dark, because the man who stepped in the garden ground outside had carefully avoided the flowers."

"It was a man, then," said Mr Horton.

"Certainly, and a gentleman."

The magistrate started.

"Here," continued Old Daylight, "is the exact size of his shoe or boot. It is the left boot. Here is that of his right boot. You see, they are lefts and rights, not the old-fashioned straights, as I wear mine."

Mr Forster was quite right. Rights and lefts, well known at the time of the Crusaders, and down to George II.'s time, had somehow disappeared from English shoes until some ten years previously, and old-fashioned people wore old-fashioned shoes.

"Why exactly half-past nine?"

"Because it rained a little at that hour; and yet the shoes of the man were dusty, as we see by the carpet in the dining-room. The poor woman knew the man very well, for she was not quite dressed; or, rather, had begun to undress when she heard his knock, first at the door, and then at both shutters."

"How's that?" asked Mr Horton.

"I have proofs," said the old man quietly, but severely. "She had pulled an old shawl over her shoulders, and had left off suddenly when winding-up her old French alarum; for somehow the pendulum was stopped, and it points to the hour. Her stays are unlaced"——

The Inspector looked with triumph at the magistrate, as much as to say, "You see how Old Daylight can work."

Mr Horton looked up with a very satisfied glance.

"But although in this hurry, she was glad to welcome this young gentleman."

"Was he her lover?"

"I don't know. She got him her best to welcome him—brandy and claret. Common people don't drink claret. She

let him smoke in her parlour, and a very fine Havannah the man smoked."

Here Old Daylight took up the butt-end of a cigar, and shook a few more grains of dust from it.

"You see," said he, "that the young man—active, and strong, and well made, I take it—was possibly in the army, certainly of a high class. He wore moustaches, which no one under an officer or a baronet indulges in; because"——

"Because why?" said the Inspector, hurriedly. "Ain't you going too fast, Daddy Daylight?"

Tom Forster looked at the police officer with ineffable scorn, and continued—

"Because the cigar is not bitten nor wetted by the lips, but has been cut in a transverse way, and has been pressed into probably a silver pipe or tube, such as they use in Spain. The young gentleman has, therefore, probably travelled on the Continent. He's young and active, for he fences; thus he has been able to commit this crime with a broken foil. He is most likely a pupil of Jackson, and boxes; for round one end of the foil has been wrapped the wash leather, and some little—very little—remains of horsehair of an old boxing glove."

"By jingo!" cried the Inspector.

"Your circumstantial evidence looks well at present," said Mr Horton. "Wait till a barrister pulls it to pieces."

"Oh! that's not all," said Daddy Daylight, very quietly. "He was young and active, as I said; for, without opening the gate, he leapt the garden wall, and clearing four feet of grass on the other side, came down in the centre bed. The footmarks correspond with the others, but are more deeply impressed. He had been abroad, since the Widow Martin had hurried to cook him an omelet—a dish for which here we don't much care. There are the broken eggs, the pan, and the beaten-up yolks on the dresser. As she bent over the pan, he sprang hurriedly from the dining-room through the door, and stabbed her in the back. She fell, but not without some struggle. Half turning round, she caught him by the glove, but caught short at him. He wore thin gloves—opera gloves—probably put on to prevent his hands being soiled by blood; for here, caught by her long nail, is a fragment of grey, thin

kid leather, scratched and torn off the glove. This also proves that the murderer was no common man."

The magistrate was delighted with the business-like manner of Old Daylight.

"Pray go on," he said.

"There is little more. Now comes the motive; and this, too, points to our previous assertion, that the assassin was well born and bred."

"His breeding has come to a bad end," said Inspector Stevenson.

"Alas!" murmured Old Daylight, "what can we say? Do what we will, our best laid schemes, as Bobby Burns has said, 'gang aft a-gey.' The motive, I have said, is not money. We might guess that from the fact of the young man being a gentleman; but here is proof. Mrs Martin's pocket was unrifled. Here is her purse; here are also some notes found in her drawers, although, from counting the spoons and forks, *some* are gone. But that's a mere blind: they will be found near here, I fancy. But there is yet more proof. The grate is full of ashes of papers. Some of these are letters, and are written on thicker paper than others; and may, perhaps, be legal documents. But here is a proof. Look upon that fragment. In a little whiter line than the surrounding paper, you will find the words, '*dear Lord!*'"

Mr Horton started.

"Can we find any more evidence like this?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, no," answered the Bow Street runner. "That stupid fellow, who is so fond of a personal clue, had no mind for intricacies, and has put the kettle on the fireplace, and crushed all the ashes of the letters. However, we have enough. Let me sum up. The murder was committed by a young, active man, dressed in a top coat, light town boots, a beaver hat—if the round mark where the dust is removed from the top of the Japanese cabinet is to be trusted—light dress kid gloves, as if he had come from a theatre. This man is a gentleman who has travelled abroad—probably in Spain—is a good fencer, and belongs to some good family. Now, then, for our search. We have the basis of it already. The Inspector, whom we will leave here with the constable, knows

my ways, and will bring me word to-morrow as to whether such a man was seen. Coach, waggon, carter, even barge might have brought him."

As he said this, the detective packed up his shreds of evidence very carefully, and gave them into the hands of Mr Horton.

"You will call for me to-morrow, Mr Stevenson."

"At Homer Street?" asked the Inspector.

"No, at Queen Anne Street, if you please. You will find me there with an old friend, whose advice is worth something."

"Are you going back to town, Mr Forster?" asked Mr Horton. "Will you share my cab? I want to have a few words with you."

"At your service, sir," said Old Daylight, with deferential respect. "Allow me a moment or so to refresh myself."

He pointed to his dirty hands, and hurried away. A half-dozen moments passed, and the old detective walked out into the garden, quite ready to join Mr Horton.

In a few minutes the yellow-bodied cab and its black-eyed driver were swinging back to town at a sharp trot, the driver sitting in his little separate seat next to Mr Forster, and popping his head round every minute, with an ardent desire to talk to him. But Old Daylight was in close confab with the magistrate, and the driver was disappointed.

"Well, they've got down two bloodhounds of the law agin that job already. I wonder whether they'll scent him out. Brownjohn's off one way, Old Daylight is on another. Woa-a, mare!" here he flicked his horse, which shied a little in the glare of the setting sun. "Country air and a good feed has given her no end of pluck. If they wasn't so busy, they'd be half afraid of a wheel coming off; but there they are—talk, talk, talk. A gentleman can't get a word in edge-ways."

And so Sam Smiles, the black-eyed, sleeve-waistcoated driver as he was, went on with his grumble. Soon he deposited the magistrate at his door in Wimpole Street, and was paid; for Mr Tom Forster got down as well, and trotted off to his home. And there, out in the country, in the quiet little cockney Acacia Villa, with the cold starlight twinkling

down through the uncurtained window, lay the dead body of Madame Martin, under the eternal heavens.

But murder will speak out, "with most miraculous organ," even though it has no tongue. Two good men and true were after the murderer. One held a clue; the other had an inductive process of his own. Were either of them on the track?

Let us bury the woman, and hide the crime. Why haunt the bodies of the dead with prying curiosity? Inspector Stevenson, let us add, took the proper steps. The coroner for Middlesex sat upon the body next day, with a sapient jury, and returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person *or persons* unknown;" for, in spite of the evidence of the Inspector and others, the foreman would insist that more than one was engaged in the perpetration of the dark deed.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCES MR EDGAR WADE.

WHEN the cock-tailed mare was rattling the magistrate and Mr Tom Forster up to London at the rate of ten miles an hour, although the cabman could get no word of our old friend, Mr Horton had him all to himself; and was not sorry for it.

"You 've had some curious experiences," said the magistrate; "and," he added, with real admiration, "you must know something of mankind, and of literature too."

"You are very good to say so," said Old Daylight. "Mine is a varied experience, and a bitter one. I was once a silversmith and watchmaker, and had a capital business; but somehow or other I was not happy. I wanted to marry, but I could not, for my old father and mother came and quartered themselves on me, and totally prevented *that*. I couldn't marry when they were with me, and I couldn't have the heart to send them away. Well, the consequence was, I and my pretty one waited and waited, till she died. I wished the old couple anywhere—in heaven, for what I cared."

Mr Horton was astonished at the old man's heartlessness.

"Poor old people!" he said. "I dare say they were not very well off."

"That's the plague of it," said Old Daylight. "The old woman died first, and the old man died soon afterwards; and, to my utter astonishment, I, who had starved myself to keep them and make them comfortable, found that the old dad had left me about five hundred a-year—an old brute!"

"What! for leaving you his fortune? You *are* eccentric."

"Not for that only," said the old man, sadly, "but for wasting my youth. When he died, I was thirty-eight or so. My love was dead. I had lost all generous enthusiasm, all hope. I gave up business, funded my money, and should have died of melancholy, save that I took to a hobby, and that was thief-catching and crime-watching. When I was a silversmith, I never had a week pass but some constable was inquiring at my shop after a thief, or bringing me a stolen spoon to identify through its engraved crest; or else some thief or another would make a plant on me to rob me. I saw how clumsily the matter was done, and I began to read about crime. I found that almost all thief-takers, from Jonathan Wild downwards, were fools."

"He had a great reputation," said Mr Horton.

"Yes, he had; but he got it by a dodge," said Old Daylight. "He used to put some poor wretch up to commit a robbery, and others to watch him. He was then down upon them, and people wondered. Ah! you don't know how little cleverness there is in the world. It's beat out thin, like gold leaf, sir,—a very little goes a far way. In the course of my reading—criminal trials, the State trials, loads of law books, and other matters—I got interested in crime; and reading in the newspapers one day of a very puzzling one, I put myself on the scent, by the aid of a friendly runner—I can see his red waistcoat and blue coat now—and brought the criminal before Sir Richard Birnie, while some fellows in the constabulary were dreaming about the matter. That gained me a good deal of applause, and gave me a new lease of life. Old Foxey—that was the celebrated Leadbetter, sir—was nearly dead with jealousy; but I must do him the justice to say that he was the first to own that it was a very neat job—very neat indeed.

Afterwards I got attached to the office in certain cases. I was a privileged person. I never take money for my work, and spend a good deal on it; but then it gives me occupation and life, sir—life."

"You live in a fashionable quarter, Mr Forster. Did I not hear you say Queen Anne Street?"

"Yes, I bought a house cheap there, sir; and I was lucky enough to find a very pearl of a lodger—or, rather, two. Mr Edgar Wade will, sir, I hope, some day be King's Counsel, sir, and write K.C. after his name. He 's rising, sir—rising; and he 's a mere baby—only thirty, sir; and that, as you know, is a baby at law."

"Ours is, indeed, a very slow profession," said the magistrate, "slow to rise in; but it offers great rewards."

"Very great, indeed. It 's one that I could have loved," said the old man. "To have been a limb of the law would have been my delight. Poor human nature, she must have something to tickle her fancy."

"Are we on the right track, now, about this Madame Martin?" asked Mr Horton, after a pause.

"I don't know. Why, here we are at Vere Street; we shall soon be at your door. There may be something in that Dutch sailor. He may have been the pilot-fish to the shark; but we will see to-morrow. I will go home, and sleep upon it."

And away the old boy trotted, when the cab stopped, after Mr Horton assuring him that he would be at his (Mr Forster's) disposal at any hour of the day or night, in reference to this case.

Mr Horton paid the cab, and went home, thinking of the dead woman. Mr Sam Smiles, the cabman, drove to a public-house, where he met with a reporter of some newspaper, and a few choice spirits, to whom he retailed his adventures; and told them, moreover, that the magistrate and all the police officers had taken him (Sam Smiles) into their confidence, and that he had put them on to the scent, which, however, he was wise enough to decline to point out.

"I gave Muster Barnett, the literary gent here, the office as I drove up this morning," said Sam, triumphantly; "and I dare say he 's known what to do with it."

"Pretty well," said Barnett Slammers, a dissipated-looking man. "The *Evening Meal*, sir, will tell you the tale; and a very pretty little story I have made of it. Here it is."

"And as nice a paragraph as I have ever seen turned out, Slammy, my boy," hiccupped another reporter. "Your health, Barnett."

Here one of the choice spirits of the parlour read out—

"'Horrible murder! This morning, the peaceful and rural neighbourhood of Kensal-Green was thrown into the utmost state of consternation and alarm by the heart-rending discovery of the successful perpetration of a cruel and diabolical murder on the body of a beautiful female in the meridian rays of existence. Awakened to the utmost vigilance by a watchful though unpaid guardian of the public peace'"——

"That's you, Sammy," interpolated Mr Slammers.

"'The active and intelligent members'"——

"That's a happy com—com—combination, Barnett," hiccupped the other reporter. "That'll live, Slammers. 'Active and intelligent!' Dash my buttons! Shakespeare could not have done better."

"'Active and intelligent members of the New Police Force,'" continued the reader, "'were immediately on the spot. Inspector Stevenson proceeded thither, to peaceful and rural Kensal-Green, with his myrmidons'"——

"What's that?" said Sam the cabman. "Gaiters, or something to eat?"

"Classics, by Jingo!" cried the admirer of Mr Slammers.

"Dash it! what a neat way he has. Byronic, sir—by Gad, sir, quite Byronic!"

"'And there found the victim of this unparalleled and outrageous brutality lying in her disrupted home, soaking in her gore. Acacia Villa, the name of the house, will henceforth become celebrated in that ghastly and crimson-stained record, the annals of crime. It was ascertained that the name of the victim is Estelle Martin, a lady of modest but of sufficient means, and of French extraction, if not of French birth. We have despatched an efficient and highly intelligent reporter to the spot, notwithstanding the distance; and we hope to-morrow to put our readers in full possession of the latest par-

ticulars of this extraordinary crime, which promises to equal in interest that of the Red Barn. The victims, it is curious to observe, have both the same surname. Estelle Martin, however, was of mature age, though still in fullest vigour, while Maria was but young. The present victim had her head nearly severed from her body.' "

"Come, now, that 's wonderful," said Sam ; "and all out of about five words as I told him ; but, as far as I hears, she was stabbed in the back."

"What matters, Barnett—what matters ? The woman dead—that 's enough."

"Quite enough," said the literary gentleman.

And taking out his duplicating paper, now and then called flimsy, he headed the paper, "The Kensal-Green Tragedy.—Further and astounding particulars ! " And having called for brandy and water for Samuel Smiles, and a glassful of the same mahogany-coloured fluid for himself, he sat down to listen to particulars from the driver of the yellow-bodied cab.

In the meantime, Daylight had reached his home ; and entered, after knocking a peculiar and well-known knock. He was answered by his cook and housekeeper, a portly and inquisitive person, who received him with, "Where have you been, sir, all day long ? " in a tone which plainly proved that she was not in the best of tempers ; for dinner had been spoiled, and that was not an unusual thing with Mr Tom Forster ; for in his own house, and in that alone, he had a very bad name. A secret is a secret, whether good or bad, and breeds suspicion ; and the owner and landlord of No. 73 Queen Anne Street, not choosing to let his people know his peculiar profession, had the most dire rumours afloat as to his doings. Why was he so mysteriously absent, sometimes for days together ? What took him on those sudden journeys ? Why did he sometimes pack up a mysterious portmanteau, and disappear ? The reader may, perhaps, guess ; but the housekeeper had very grave suspicions, and would not have stayed in the house but for the very excellent wages which the old gentleman paid.

"Is Mr Edgar Wade come home from chambers ? " asked Forster, suddenly. "I was detained in the country, and could not get home. Get me some tea, and be quick."

There was that about his tone that rendered the woman silent and respectful.

"Yes, sir; Mr Wade has come home, and was asking for you. Mrs Wade is but middling, sir—not very well."

"God bless me! I'm sorry for that. Bring tea at once."

The old gentleman was as hungry as a hunter.

"If you have any cold meat, bring it too," he said.

And he entered the back dining-room—a handsome apartment, with a capital fire, and surrounded by books. There, sinking into a chair, the old gentleman divested himself of his Hessian boots, and fell musing over the events of the day. The tea and cold meat came, and were despatched; and then, with his head still full of the complicated inductions of the case, Old Daylight sent his compliments to Mr Edgar Wade—and said that he would wait on him. With the housekeeper, that gentleman, who was the only person Mr Forster much cared for in the world—save, indeed, his mother, Mrs Wade—entered, and, having shaken the old gentleman's hand warmly, he sat down. He had in his hand the evening paper—the *Meal*—and a packet of letters, neatly tied with red tape.

Mr Edgar Wade was a handsome, aristocratic-looking man, well dressed, with a black coat, a roll collar of velvet, a deep black satin stock, and his hair worn *à la* Brutus—that is, cut short over his well-formed head—showing, however, a fine white forehead, massive, broad, and high. The rest of the face was in keeping: the eyes brilliant and rather deep-set, which gave them a penetrating glance; the mouth very fine, and closely shut; the lips somewhat thin, but of good colour; the chin full of firmness. He was compactly built, and about the middle height; but looked tall, being spare and muscular. His face bore lines of study, and his whole manner was that of a self-possessed gentleman of a noble profession, in which he had already made a mark. Mr Forster, who knew him for a most industrious and hard worker, and an excellent son, had, indeed, left him all his property in his will, and had long looked upon him as his own. He was, however, too occupied with his new case to see how poorly and how pale the barrister looked; but when he sat down, and the light fell upon his face, he noticed it.

"Good gracious, Edgar!" he said; "what is the matter? You have been working too hard of late."

"Perhaps so, sir," said Edgar; "however, I have enough to make me. Here is my dear mother fallen suddenly into a most terrible and distressing illness, from which, I fear, she will never recover."

Mr Tom Forster, who had nourished, as we have said, a secret passion for the lady, jumped up from his seat with a bound.

"Nothing so serious as that, my dear boy, I hope."

Edgar shook his head sadly, and passed his white hand over his forehead.

"Yes, indeed," he said, with a sad smile, which touched the old man to the heart; "she is my only relation—is the only one whom I have ever known; the only one who ever loved me, at least."

"Your father, then, is dead, long ago?" said Old Daylight, interrogatively;—and the word brought back the dead woman he had seen. "Dead!" he murmured. "Dead enough! Will anything bring back the dead."

"Would to God something could!" said the barrister, with an earnestness that brought Tom Forster back from his wanderings. "No; *he* is not dead, and she nearly is. Look here! you see this paper?"

Here he held out the *Evening Meal*, with his finger on a marked paragraph.

"My mother was quite well till this evening. As she was reading the paper I always bring home for her, her eye fell upon that paragraph."

And sure enough, Mr Edgar Wade's finger pointed out the very paragraph which had been received with such warm applause in the little circle ornamented by Mr Samuel Smiles, cabman!

Much as Mr Forster admired the press, he had been seldom so much astonished at its quickness as he was then. How men could get the type together and printed, let alone putting it into such wonderful English, was to him a matter of mystery. But all his wonder was absorbed in the more wonderful fact that the murder at Kensal-Green should have an effect, and

so sad an effect, upon the peaceful house of Mr Thomas Forster, who, with his brain full of his own inductive process, was about unravelling the mystery. Mrs Wade must, of course, have known something about that woman. Here, then, was a clue that Mr Brownjohn would have given his ears for!

The old man's eyes wandered over the paragraph, and his mind noted, in its own quiet way, the error at the end; but all that the philosophic detective could ask was, "Did your mother know her, then?"

"Know her! know the Widow Martin! of course she did. She was intimately connected with her; and she no sooner read of her dreadful death, than, with a scream, she fell in a fit. I rushed to her, and found her hand convulsively clasped upon that paragraph. Then I knew the cause."

"Knew the cause?" stammered Old Daylight, more and more puzzled; "knew the cause?"

"Of course I did. Madame Martin was *my* nurse!"

CHAPTER V.

EDGAR WADE SEEKS AN ADVISER.

A SECRET, as was sagely said in the last chapter, is a secret; and, whether it be good or bad, is often a trouble to the owner, even if he wishes to conceal it for honourable purposes. So it was with Old Forster. Events had succeeded themselves at such a rate during that eventful day, that, as he followed Edgar Wade up his own handsome stone staircase, he had need of undergoing a process—not unknown to him—of mentally shaking and pulling himself together.

"Hallo!" said he to himself, "I had nearly let the cat out of the bag! 'Why is this old fellow so interested in this particular murder?' my boy will ask; for, although he is as innocent as a lamb, he is a barrister, and sharp—dev'lish sharp!"

All persons have a belief, which you shall not tear from them with red-hot pincers, that their own barrister, and particular lawyer or physician, know a great deal more than any one else's barrister, lawyer, or physician. It is a portion of our

conceit. Let us borrow Old Daylight's expression as we for a moment pause over it, and exclaim, "Poor human nature!"

But, sharp as Mr Edgar Wade was, he was so absorbed in his own misfortune, and his mother's sickness, that he never gave one thought to Daylight's agitation, and it is therefore to be presumed that he did not notice it. Old Forster hugged himself for his lucky escape, for he loved his hobby as much as he loved his secretly adopted son; and he feared that if his occupation as detective were found out, Edgar Wade would at once cut him.

"A high-spirited young chap like that," said Forster, "wouldn't go to consort with an old thief-taking, crime-tracking, murder-marking individual like myself! Not a bit. The wonder is he 's never found it out. But he 's a tip-top barrister, he is—none of your Old Bailey prowlers. If he has anything to do with crime, it 's the forging of a duke's will, or the running away of a baronet's wife with a young and spirited marquis—that 's the game for him! High game, indeed! None of your low, vulgar murders."

But, after all, crime is a vulgar matter; and so the more reflective Daylight thought as he sat down in Edgar Wade's easy chair, and glanced round the barrister's room. Edgar, in the meantime, let down the flap of an antique cabinet, and, placing the light near him, arranged his letters properly, and then prepared to speak.

The room was well and substantially furnished, but still was the room of a student; although vases of flowers, and one or two feminine knick-nacks seemed, to the ordinary mind, to betray a woman's hand. But no woman had helped Edgar. His mind was feminine, delicate, fond of luxury and pretty adornments; while it was, on the other hand, vigorous and full of life. But there was more of the student than the man of the world in the room. Two or three fine mezzotints of judges were framed, and adorned the room; but there were none of Messrs Fores' celebrated pugilistic encounters, or portraits of celebrated fighters or wrestlers, or even of Captain Barclay walking his world-famed match; nor even those capital caricatures of the beaux of the day, which have descended to our time; nor of the spirited hunting or stage-coach adventures

then published by H. Alken. Nor were there any boxing-gloves, single-sticks, and crossed foils in that room, as the observant eye of the old detective did not fail to note. Near one window was Edgar's standing desk, which he had brought from Cambridge with him; and above it a copper-plate of his old college, St Blazius; and on the side-shelf of the desk were recent editions of Coke and Blackstone, and the celebrated law-book, "Sugden on Vendors," from which it is to be presumed Mr Edgar had been taking notes.

Mr Tom Forster sat down with some degree of relief, and looked round him. Suddenly he called out—

"But Mrs Wade, Edgar—if she is ill or worse"——

"If Mrs Wade rings," said Edgar, in a cold, dry tone, "she will be attended to. The nurse will go and see her."

Nurse! Had he left her to a nurse, and he such an affectionate fellow? Well, trouble had turned *his* head, strong as it was, and young as he was. Poor human nature!

"Now, look here," said Old Forster, bursting all over with suppressed filial affection—for whatever irritation he felt for the deceased Forster *père*, who, instead of enjoying himself like a rational being, had kept his money a secret, and made his son work like a slave, Daylight had a tender heart, full of real reverence for old people, and none the less because he was old and grey-headed himself—"Now, look here, Edgar, you 're put out, you know you are. Keep your temper, my boy. Why call your dear mother—and a better lady never trod neat's leather—Mrs Wade? Why not, as always, mother?"

"Why?" answered Edgar, still coldly. "Why?"

"Look here"——

Mr Forster was again about to reply, but the barrister stopped him.

"Why, my dear old friend—and here, I confess, I am compelled to plead to you as my old friend—*because Mrs Wade is not my mother!*"

"Poor human!"——

The old Bow Street officer did not finish his phrase; as he felt a fly might have knocked him down with an extension of one of its hind legs! He recovered himself, however.

"Now, look here," he began again; "you 're a clever fellow,

Edgar—a dev'lish clever fellow; but you work too hard, as they say in the slang dictionary"—(Forster was about to apologise for his too frequent use of the vulgar tongue, which he picked up in his work, and he put his fault on the slang dictionary)—"you're off your head, you are; you don't know what you say. *Not* your mother!"

Old Daylight rubbed his hands as if he had said something utterly impossible to refute—as that the earth goes round the sun, or two and two make four.

"It's impossible," he added.

The barrister merely looked at him with a quiet, sad, pitying expression.

"It seems impossible," he said; "but, nevertheless, it is true."

After this a fly might, after knocking Old Daylight down, have trampled him to pieces. Here were the two people he most admired in the world rejecting each other. Here was a pattern son throwing his mother to the winds. As for Forster, he could *not* believe it. His inductive process might have failed—the British constitution have broken up—the world itself have come to an end sooner. For Old Forster loved strongly where he did love, and never loved without respect.

But somehow, beyond this terrible new revelation, inextricably connected with it, arose the ghastly phantom of Estelle Martin, with its gaunt, thin figure, and its clasped hands.

"Go on, Edgar, go on. I must only listen," was all he could say.

"Was there anybody ever so troubled as I am?" said the barrister, fiercely. "Heaven seems to have a spite against me—against ME only."

He said this fiercely, as if he were very angry with heaven.

"Against me more than against any one else," he repeated. "Heaven knows how I loved that woman—how, from the first time I could work, I sacrificed for her my energy, my talent, and my youth. I knew there was some dark story of wrong—that I could never see my father; and so I loved her more. I constituted myself my unknown father's judge; I blamed him for his desertion, his cruelty; in everything I was on my mother's side; and she—she from my very babyhood betrayed

me ; she covered me with kisses, like those of Judas ; her very love for me was hypocrisy ; her seeming devotion to me was a cunning lie."

The young man walked up and down his room, and fanned his forehead with the papers he held, as if burning with heat.

Old Daylight looked at him with astonishment. But it is worth while noting, in the study of the man, that his inductive process had already commenced, and that he was already in some way connecting all this with Madame Martin.

"And why was this?" continued Edgar Wade ; "why was a poor little baby, a child at its most defenceless time, thus a prey to the cunning of that most cunning of all things—a wicked woman who is a mother?"

"He knows the world, he does," whispered Tom Forster to himself.

"Because"—here the barrister checked himself, and spoke deliberately, as if pleading before a jury ; while, as if to mark every word he said with a due weight, he paused where most emphatic—"because, by that overloading me with so much care and love, making me the object of so much seeming fondness, she could sooner rob me and deceive others—deceive others for her own sake—rob me for the sake of her child of shame—rob me, ME of a noble name, of well-descended ancestors, of an immense fortune."

"'Tis she," muttered Old Daylight. "I see it now ; the links draw closer and closer."

The barrister had reached his climax, and sat down overwhelmed by being the victim of so much treachery, of so deep a plot.

Then Old Daylight, after due reflection, began to speak.

"My dear Edgar, look here—I can see pretty clearly what you mean." Then he checked himself, thinking, no doubt, that he must not say too much. "But are you sure of this? The charge is a grave one, the accusation most terrible ; but to have carried this scheme out is to suppose Mrs Wade the heroine of a villainous romance—to presume that she had a coolness and an audacity we rarely find in women. She must have been helped in her wickedness—had accomplices, friends, perhaps her husband."

"Her husband!" said Edgar, bitterly. "No; I took all for granted as it was. I did not suppose her a widow, if you did."

Edgar Wade knew very well the meaning of *a bar sinister!*

The barrister's face turned almost scarlet with shame, and then grew livid and pale.

"Heaven help you, Edgar," said Old Daylight, calmly, "if you were the victim of such a plot! Your youth embittered thus!"

"But it is no longer so," said the barrister. "Retribution begins to work. We will instal ourselves in our true seat. We will be no longer the victims of these miserable plotters."

The old philosopher sat and reflected; and his eye, microscopic in its observations, ran over the apartment, mechanically taking an inventory. He could not help that. There, for instance, thrown down on the drawing-room table, with the black kid gloves tossed by its side, was the barrister's well-worn hat; there—but the hat was enough. That, somehow, put Forster in mind of out-door work, and his own business. He knew he was the very man to help Edgar at this moment; but how to do it without revealing his precious hobby?

"My dear boy," he began, "it seems to me that we are wasting time. You asked me up here, it seems, to consult with me. Well, I perhaps can advise you as well as any man; at any rate, I am entirely devoted to you. Now, look here. You have told me a wonderful story. A woman whom I thought an angel has turned out just the reverse. Poor human nature! But let that pass. You are a lawyer, and know what law is. How have you learnt all this? Where are your proofs?"

The decided, business-like tone of the old man rather startled the barrister, who, till then, had thought him a pre-occupied, pottering old boy, with no very great amount of mind; and who had only consulted him because he had no one else to consult. But he was ready with his answer.

"I know what law is. I have known this secret for three weeks. I don't act suddenly. I have moral and important proofs—proofs so strong, so undeniable, that, with one or two

words from a living witness, no jury in the world would hesitate a moment. But that word she will never speak. The Widow Martin has been sacrificed to keep me still where I am."

"I see it all," muttered Old Daylight.

"I know that she would have spoken that word. I have seen her when she left her chapel. She promised me that she would tell all; but now I am at the mercy of the world. My father will deny me. Mrs Wade will disown her deeds: she would even with the rope round her neck."

Old Forster shuddered. That neck, which he could have thought fit to wear a chain of the purest gold, a carcanet of rubies, to be touched by the vile fingers of the hangman! And she *was* his mother, Edgar's mother—at least, he thought her so.

"She would deny all," continued the barrister, "I am quite sure. I have proofs; but this unhappy crime has struck me down, and turned those proofs into unrealities. One stroke of a razor across a woman's throat, and farewell all my hopes."

"It wasn't a razor!" said Old Daylight, hastily.

Luckily, the barrister did not notice him, or his secret was very nigh out. Then hurrying to cover up the little hole from which it might have escaped, he cried—

"Explain to me, my dear Edgar, this terrible mystery." ("I see it all," thought the old fox.) "Sometimes, you know, old heads are better than young ones. Perhaps I can advise you."

Mr Edgar Wade cast a look upon Old Daylight, which, but for its utter vacuity and helplessness, would have been somewhat rude; for it certainly had in it no particular warmth of trust or confidence. Then he walked up and down the room as if uncertain; then he went to his cabinet, and sitting down, fell into a brown study.

Forster fidgeted terribly, for he was on thorns to begin his inductive process in aid of the young fellow whom he loved best in all the world. He rubbed one worsted stocking against the other; pulled up one slipper after the other; looked at his never-failing watch; counted his huge bunch of seals; and, finally, commenced—

"My dear Edgar, you were about to say"——

The barrister held up his hand as if for silence.

"Yes," he said, "I will tell you all;—any confidant, in a matter like this, is better than none."

"Complimentary," thought Forster; "but oh! if he could but tell what I know about it!"

"You see," said Edgar, "that, as a gentleman and a man of honour, I was at first somewhat to blame in my method of finding this out. Three weeks ago I came home and found Mrs Wade, whom I then thought my mother, out on a visit. I wanted some title-deeds in which were narrated certain incidents which, to amuse my dear mother, as I then thought her, I had shown her. I could not find them, and I went into the room Mrs Wade occupies, and to her desk, thinking that she had referred to them. The desk was open, and there I found these papers; and my eye fell upon the words, 'My darling Eugenie.' The name was my mother's; the writing, I felt sure, was my father's. I determined to read them."

"You did wrong, young man," said Old Forster, severely.

"I know I did, and I have been severely punished. Even in my trouble and shame I was happy till then; but now—but now, it seems as if the firm earth was sinking under me, and I had no foothold and no helping hand to be stretched out to help me."

The young man—so bold, so brave, so cold, so hard and manly—covered his face with his thin, white hands; and Forster thought he saw tears trickling through the fingers. He himself was moved; he forgot his inductive philosophy, and blew his nose violently with his red bandana: it was not to conceal his emotion, it was his manner of weeping. The awful sound brought Edgar Wade to himself. Taking up a bundle of papers, duly arranged, he threw them to Old Daylight, saying—

"Here are the letters—read them."

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE LETTERS WRIT FOR OTHER EYES THAN THINE!

OLD FORSTER took the letters, but with a delicate repugnance. Tradesman as he had been, and crime-tracker as he was, he had, at the bottom of his heart, a fund of goodness and delicacy which many gentlemen want.

"You had better read them to me, Edgar, my boy," he said. "My eyes are not very good. But, pardon me, let me look at the writing."

The letters were well preserved, and docketed; written on large quarto letter-paper, in a delicate, cultivated hand. The ink was faded, and the paper yellow with age.

"You are quite right, Mr Forster," said Edgar, touched with his delicacy. "I will read them. You see how they commence: they are always pretty nearly the same. Sometimes 'dear' gives place to 'beloved;' but these are minutiæ, which do not concern the case in point.

"'MY DEAR EUGENIE,—How I wish I were again in France with you, my sweet one! But, alas! it will never be.'"

"Mrs Wade was Eugenie. Was she French?" asked Old Daylight. "I had never observed that."

"No," answered Edgar, "her accent was perfect. Most Frenchmen never learn English, but some French ladies speak it as well as we do. Eugenie Autra was the daughter of a good family, which had been reduced, and kept a *pension* in Paris, at which English young ladies of the highest families were brought up. The wars with England scattered these boarders, and reduced the families from riches almost to poverty, so I have since found; but not before my father, an English nobleman, visiting his little sister, had seen and fallen in love with Eugenie."

"Good," murmured Old Daylight. "That will account for something."

Everything, indeed, accounted for something in the old philosopher's inductive process.

Edgar continued reading.

"'Your letter made my sad heart joyful. So you forgive me all! Alas! I am more unhappy than you; but *noblesse oblige.* You do not know my *entourage*—my father, my family—they are people to be known and to be dreaded. I am married indeed, and against my will. The vows I registered in Heaven were for you, my Eugenie; and these we solemnised, in those happy days in Prussia, by a marriage ceremony made for nobles and kings. But this my tyrant father, and more tyrant social laws in England, of that society that I so much despise, will not acknowledge. I have been, as you know, forced into marriage. I could almost hate the pale-faced girl—the English miss—who, with a large fortune tied to her unfortunate self, has been only too glad to bear my name. She is my wife, according to English law; but you, Eugenie, are my wife before Heaven—my Left-handed Bride—and the left hand is nearest the heart.'"

"That may be French reasoning, but it won't satisfy English law," said Forster, wiping his eye-glass.

"It is enough that it was written to a Frenchwoman who believed its sophistry," said Edgar, dryly. "Here is another letter. I will only read the portions which concern us, and you will see that the plot unfolds."

"'And am I a father, dearest Eugenie? Have I a son by the woman, *the wife*'—the word is underlined—'I love best of all the world—her living image? Oh, that I had wings to fly to her and kiss her, and embrace her in her sorrow. Oh, my darling—my darling! Alas! to overwhelm me with misfortune, with sorrow, with regret, my English lady has also brought me a son. How I turn with repugnance from this, my lawful heir, to the child of my soul-wife, of my Eugenie! How I shudder with anxiety, with regret, with remorse, with sorrow, when I look forward to the future of those two poor children! Ah, Eugenie—if I dared'"——

"Poor helpless babes! By St George, by St Bridget, by the very pump at Aldgate!" cried Old Daylight, "the plot begins to unfold. Poor human nature!—forced into a corner, she does anything and everything! What is the date of that letter?"

"Upon my word, Mr Forster, you are singularly acute," said the barrister, turning on the old fellow a searching look.

"You see, I—I am particular about dates," said the inductive philosopher, with an awkward excuse.

But the younger man seemed at once to have forgotten what he said, for he turned to the postmark, and said—

"This is from Mayence, December 1798. You see," said he to Old Daylight, in an explanatory way, "the importance of this letter. My father is forced to marry when he has already given away his heart to Mdlle. Eugenie Autra. He adores this woman. It is the old, old story, which arises from our restless passions and follies. The man adores his mistress, and detests his wife. They both become mothers at about the same time, and the love that he bears severally to the mothers he carries to the account of the children. He is madly fond of my brother—he hates me."

"Yes, he hates you," said the inductive philosopher, with a pleased look. The story was being fitted together before his old eyes, like a puzzle-map by which they teach children geography.

"He hates me," said the barrister, touching himself on the chest with his white finger, and speaking bitterly. "He hates me, against all laws, both human and divine."

"How curious it is," thought Old Daylight. "Here's a man of thirty quite indignant at the wrongs of an infant, which, as an infant, he neither knew nor felt. But there—what shall we say?—poor human nature!"

"The last letter," continued the barrister, "which I read ends with a dash, as if it gave vent to a half-interrupted thought. Upon that thought lies half my troubles—or let us say all. To that thought, the Widow Martin"——

"I see—I see," said the old man, impatiently. "Come, let us have some more extracts, if they do not pain you."

He was anxious to unravel the mystery. He knew the end, but yet he wanted confirmation of his suspicions.

Edgar continued.

"All the immediately subsequent letters bear traces of the intense fondness of my father for this child—my half-brother—this"——

"Hush!" said Old Daylight; "at least, the poor child was guiltless."

"Poor fellow! my heart bleeds for him," returned the barrister; "but not less for my helpless self. Here is one dated about three months afterwards.

"'I am always thinking, my Eugenie, of the future of my son—of *our* son. He is my only care. Ah, how I wish that the power of the nobility was as strong as it was of old in this country.'

"This is dated from Normandy. It would seem that my mother was of delicate health; and being detained abroad by the war, she expected to be confined abroad."

"I quite see it. Capitally conceived," said Old Daylight, cracking his fingers in delight. "Very prettily done." Then he checked himself, and called himself "an old fool" behind his silk bandana.

"'This son, my Eugenie,'" Edgar continued, "'will be like us both. From his mother he will inherit those *beaux yeux*, so full of vivacity—that fine complexion, that wit, that cleverness. From his father, ancient blood, pride, valour, and independence; the sentiment of grand old races, which descends, with good lineage, as the coldness of the mountain stream runs down into the valleys.'"

As he read this, the young man held himself up boldly, as if he, too, and from a more legitimate source, could claim those qualities.

Forster was delighted to think that his secretly adopted son and heir was the lawful descendant of such a nobleman.

"'But what will be his future? God, my Eugenie, must give to this poor child all that can deck the offspring of so pure, so strong a love as ours; while the *protected* little one—he who is born to the purple, and is safely nourished under the ægis of our English law, may be, is indeed to me, a monster.'"

"*I* am that monster!" cried the barrister, with the hard voice of suppressed anger. Then he continued—

"'Eugenie—Eugenie—will you not have mercy on your child and his father? Will you not? I conjure you by your faith, in which you will do no sin that is not pardonable, enter into my little arrangements. All is ready. My lady is now at Rouen, and has a Norman nurse; my valet, a Swiss fellow, is as faithful as a dog—as dumb, too—and as secret as the grave.'"

"'My lady!" muttered the old philosopher. "Pray go on, sir. Go on, Edgar, my boy; it *is* interesting!"

"This passionate appeal," said the barrister, "seems to have been the final one. Eugenie—or Mrs Wade, as she called herself in England—seems to have yielded to the entreaties of my father; for the next letter, dated a week later, is very explicit.

"'My valet, Gustave, of whom I have spoken, will give you this. He is a Swiss, and speaks German, French, and English equally badly; but you can understand him, and, what is more, you can trust him. He will bring with him a young Boulognese girl, a fisher wife, and her baby, who is about the age of your own. This young woman will be a ready implement to all we want; and only requires to be paid well, to be fed well, and to dress well, and she will do anything, as most of the lower class women will.'"

"Dash his aristocratic impudence!" said Old Daylight. "Poor human nature!"

"'Your child will come to Normandy, where so many children are brought up, where his rival is peacefully sucking his Norman milk; and then an accident, or a storm, *or something of that sort*—for fortune helps the bold—will make the two nurses take shelter in the same auberge—in the same room.

"'There will be a quarrel among the people—there always is when people drink well, and Gustave shall manage that—and in that quarrel and fright the children will be changed.'"

"A good plot! a very neat plot, my lord," said Forster, cracking his fingers.

Edgar continued—

"'Gustave and the young woman, whose name is Estelle Martin, and who is the lawful wife, dear soul, of an intelligent animal who provides us with fish on this coast'"——

"Ah! my faith! that fellow Brownjohn has something in his clue," said Old Daylight to himself, with a feeling of chagrin. Then he comforted himself with the remembrance—"No; it is broken, for Madame Martin was a widow."

These thoughts did not interrupt Edgar, who read on—

"'Gustave and the nurse will furnish you with clothes exactly the same in material and pattern as those worn by Monsieur. They purchase these things at warehouses; and

every rag, every stitch will be the same, and marked the same, each alike with the coronet which, one day, your boy—*our* boy—will wear with such pride. That, my Eugenie, will be your reward for acting so nobly!'"

"Nobly!" thought Forster. "Well, there are two ways of looking at everything."

"'And you will console yourself with the thought that your offspring—the dearest part of you—will be often in my arms, always in my heart, and covered with my kisses. As *to the other*, I know your truth and goodness. You will cherish him as your own. You will again and again, every day, my Eugenie, prove to me how you love me. Do not think of the guilt of this: it deceives no one, it can hurt no one. The heir to the estates and name I bear is my child, of my dearest and best blood—and *your* blood is better than the puddle of a shopkeeper, although he has enriched himself, as did my respected English father-in-law. The Autras were Knights of Aquitaine. The two nations so often at war will be joined in our issue, who shall, one day, sit in the English House of Peers. Heaven, if we succeed in so many difficult paths, and in such unforeseen circumstances, will smile on our endeavour and bless our deed.'"

"He knows how to plead with a woman, that fellow there," said Daylight, pointing to the letter. "By St Bridget, St Botolph, and the Bank of England, he *is* clever."

Then, with a revulsion of feeling, he said—

"Unhappy man, he makes Heaven an accomplice of his crime."

Edgar shuddered, as if cold.

"You see," he continued, "the woman seems to have rejected the idea at first; and then, miserable creature, to have yielded."

"Softly, softly!" said Old Forster. "It appears to me that your father was much more to blame than your mother—beg pardon, than Madame Wade."

"Yes," said Edgar, with a violent gesture. "Yes; men are, in the incipient circumstances of crime, more guilty than women. It is for men to propose, for women to reject. He, the Earl of Chesterton"——

"The Earl of Chesterton!" cried Forster. "What! that tip-top swell who holds his head so high?"

"The very same," said the young man, with a certain pride.

"The Earl of Chesterton has thought out and laid the lines of all this plot. But, then, he has something to excuse him; and it is curious that I feel no hatred towards *him*. He has his excuse—intense love for this woman, intense love for his child, a passion which he could not control. All the love that he felt he has shown; and, at least, he has not, like this miserable creature, deceived me for thirty years. Moreover, he has been cruelly punished."

"Punished! How so?" said Old Daylight. "I saw him at Ascot with the royal party; he looked at a distance as well as you—young and well-looking—with his son, Lord Wimpole."

"I am Lord Wimpole," said Edgar, proudly. "You, at least, should believe so."

"I do," returned Old Daylight, hastily. "But how has the Earl been punished?"

"I will tell you. Here are one or two more extracts:—

"'DEAREST EUGENIE,—All went well. The nurses met. There was a storm, or a threatened one; they took refuge in a cabaret. Your nurse's husband was there, and pretended to be—or, egad, I think the fellow *was*—jealous of Gustave. At any rate, there was a desperate quarrel, and in the row the babies were successfully changed. Our nurse went into hysterics, and knew nothing about the matter; neither knows the fisherman Martin anything, for he was very fairly drunk. The secret rests, then, with Gustave, Estelle Martin, and our two selves. Providence has aided us; let us thank God for His goodness. Now, dearest, I shall be happy—as happy as I can be without you. From time to time you shall have news of your—of *our* son.'

"Now, what do you say?" asked Edgar Wade, triumphantly.

"Upon my soul, upon my affidavit," cried Old Daylight, in triumph, "you are NOT the son of Mrs Wade!"

Edgar grasped his hand warmly.

"Now," said he, "listen. Now comes the punishment. The letters continue for years, and from the Earl always as fondly.

There is much news of my rival, who is growing, we are told, a fine fellow. He hunts, he fishes, he shoots; while I am for ever at eternal books. But at last the letters are interrupted. Then come some of reproach.

"'Alas! Eugenie, alas! at last I know all. I herewith send you a deed of settlement, which will make you rich: would that it would make you happy! A friend of your own nation—cruel as friends are—has told me all. You have been watched; *the visits of the officer!*'—underlined—'have been noted; and, alas! *I* have seen him enter your house. I have now no more doubts. You, for whom I have pawned my very soul—you, whose faith I could have sworn to—you, whom I loved above all—*you* have deceived me. I have been guilty for nothing. I am assured that you have deceived me for nothing. We part for ever. I will receive no letters from you. The grave has, as it were, closed over our love, leaving me with the poisoned arrow of this doubt—Is this child, for whom I have sacrificed so much, my own?'"

CHAPTER VII.

"*BROTHERS IN BLOOD, BUT WIDE-DIVORCED IN SOUL.*"

OLD FORSTER, called Daylight—who, being an inductive philosopher, understood complications as well as most men—laid his head upon his two hands, and rocked backwards and forwards, muttering to himself his favourite phrase, "Poor human nature," several times. Then he began to think that, considering all things, man was an unhappy animal; that when he meddled with he generally muddled matters; and that no more proper or more intense punishment to Philip Stanfield, the proud Earl of Chesterton, could have been found than that which, after all his plots and deceptions, left him uncertain of his son—nay, uncertain if, indeed, the ancestral blood that he so much talked of flowed in the veins of him who would wear the coronet of Chesterton.

"Oh," said Mr Tom Forster, as he thought over all this—

> "'Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we practise to deceive.'"

But he was not making rhymes: he was merely quoting the literary baronet, Sir Walter Scott's poem of "Marmion," which was at the time very popular.

The more Old Daylight thought over the matter, the more sure he felt of his inductive process. Poor Edgar Wade, overcome with conflicting emotions, was silent. Old Forster put his hand kindly on his shoulder, and said to him—

"Edgar, my boy, if every one else in the world should desert you, I never will. I have no doubt of your story. I will do all that patient research can do to prove it true. There are means to do so you little think of. But now we had better go to bed. I will wait on you to-morrow morning, and we will then consult how to proceed.

"I am not tired," said Edgar, yet saying the words most wearily. "I am at the end of my tether. What am I to do? Estelle Martin is dead—dead; and her secret is with her, and will be buried with her in the grave. Poor woman!—it was too heavy for her, and she would have confessed. It tormented her. But there!" cried the barrister, impatiently, "what can you do against luck? Some common, money-seeking ruffian, for the sake of a few pounds, breaks into the house and murders my chief witness. Fortune is against me."

"Money-seeking scoundrel," repeated Forster, emphasising the word "money." "Are you sure of that, Edgar?"

The question made the barrister start. His eyes glared for a moment, with a meaning look, upon the old man.

"Do you mean"—— he cried. "But no, the suggestion is too horrible. No, that cannot be, as I well know. Perhaps," he said, suddenly, "I may yet have hopes. Estelle must have had some letters and papers — perhaps some deeds even, executed by my father. We must search the house.

Alas! Old Forster too well knew that the poor woman had not left a scrap of paper. All her writings had disappeared as entirely as those of Mr William Shakespeare, poet and drama-

tist, of glorious memory, whose works he, the amateur detective, was very fond of reading.

"Papers," he muttered to himself. "No, there is not a drawer that I have not ransacked, nor a cupboard that I have not looked into. I even ripped up the cover of a capital horsehair mattress. *That* is what the murderer of Madame Martin was after. *He* found the papers, and burnt them in the kitchen grate over the head of the dead woman. I am right as a trivet. *That* is the way when one takes to the profession scientifically. There is no guess-work with me."

"There may be some hope there," added he, aloud, like an old hypocrite as he was, when he well knew there was none. "Have you no other hopes?"

"Except in appealing to the Earl himself, none. After all, he was not so bad. He settled on me, it would seem, a handsome income. I was well educated, as you know. Mdlle. Eugenie Autra would come over to England. She settled at Richmond, near London; and I was sent to Rugby. I remember a fine, noble-looking man, to whom the head master paid great deference"——

"Clergymen, as a rule, are tuft-hunting fellows," interpolated Daylight.

"This gentleman said he was a friend of my father's. He was, indeed, his best friend and worst enemy: he was himself."

"I should just like to see some of his writing, to compare it with that of the Earl. I have no doubt it is the same."

"You shall see," said Edgar. "I have ascertained that. The Earl is a gentleman of the old school, and with him *noblesse oblige*. Like the great Duke of Wellington, our present Prime Minister—long may he live!—he answers every letter sent to him. Here is one received in answer to a scientific friend of mine, Dr Richards, upon some trifling question. The Earl, you know, is President of the Antiquarian Society."

Here Edgar produced a courteous reply, commencing, "The Earl of Chesterton presents his compts. to Dr Richards and . . . ." It was written in the stiff, formal, and complimentary manner required by ordinary politeness; but there was quite sufficient in it to identify the handwriting. But, somehow, Daylight did not seem to recognise *that* fact.

"I wish you would let me take these two writings and compare them down-stairs. I have a magnifier down there, and my eyes are bad," urged the cunning old fellow.

"Very good, only return them to me," said the barrister, carelessly tossing over the papers to Old Forster. "They may be of no use now."

But old Tom Forster, who knew better, carefully selected one of the least important letters, and put it, with that of the Earl's, in a vast black leather pocket-book, which he always carried with him. He had hardly done so, when a light knock at the door was heard, and a nurse entering softly, as if she still trod the sick chamber, told Edgar Wade that his mother was somewhat better, and wished to speak to him.

"Ask her," said Tom Forster, in a whisper, "what was the actual message of the sick person?"

Edgar did so.

"The words were," said the nurse, who was young and intelligent, and who wore a rosary hanging from the band of her dress, being probably a Roman Catholic—"the words were, 'Tell my son, Edgar Wade, that *his mother* wishes to see him. He must not disobey *her* commands.'"

"You see," whispered Edgar, with a mournful smile, "that what I said was true. She will keep the game up to the last. She has a lucid interval after her shock, and the first thing she does is to send for me with such a message. Well, I'll go. We must carry on the comedy, or tragedy—which is it, Mr Forster?—for some time longer. Would it were ended!"

And the young barrister, with the air of a martyr, rose and left the room.

Left to himself, Old Daylight indulged in extraordinary gestures. He cracked all his finger-joints, one after the other; he gave a low whistle from the popular opera of "Masaniello;" he looked at his documents; and, finally, he ran down-stairs and ordered his housekeeper to bring up brandy and water to Mr Wade's rooms; and produced, for her to take up, some admirable *eau de vie de Cognac*, which had *not* that dark mahogany colour which was then generally to be observed.

"All goes well," said he, as he walked noiselessly up-stairs. "If that barrister-magistrate be what I think he is, he will

have somebody lodged safely in one of his Majesty's gaols before the week's out. Give me the inductive process, and a little luck, such as I have *here*, and a fig for getting on the scent, as Old Brownjohn does. Scent! What is the scent? It as often fails a man as it does a dog. Moreover, a man is not a dog; he is a superior animal."

As he said this he entered the room, and presently the brandy was brought, and he took the liberty to brew himself a very stiff glass, and mix one for Edgar. He had need of alcohol to refresh and give a stimulus to his somewhat tired faculties. It soon had its effect, and Forster was ready to work away for his adopted son till daylight. That gentleman soon entered.

"I have taken the liberty, my boy," said Forster, "to order up my brandy and some hot water. Take this and a biscuit. It will do us both good."

Mr Wade's answer was, to his intense astonishment, to empty the tumbler at a draught.

"You are right," said he. "I feel better now. I wanted *that*."

"How is Mrs Wade?" asked Foster.

"As bad and as mad as ever. If she be not mad, she will become so. She overwhelmed me with reproaches. She called me 'an atrocious ruffian,' and treated me as if I were positively a murderer."

"You should send for the doctor at once."

"I have done so. My friend, Dr Richards, will be here presently."

There was silence for some time. Then Old Daylight broke it.

"The more I think of your affairs, my dear boy, the more I am puzzled"—the old rogue was not puzzled at all—"the more I am in doubt, were I in your place, what measures I should take."

"My poor old friend," said Edgar, with a compassionate patronage, "you are quite right. There is such a combination of circumstances, so terrible a conspiracy, that it would puzzle wiser heads than yours, and utterly confound men of greater experience."

A sly smile played for an instant about Old Daylight's lips as he listened.

"Now, let us presume that this Mrs Wade dies, or becomes insane, both of which chances are on the cards, another link of the chain is broken, another witness, from whose unwilling lips an examining barrister could extort a good deal, escapes me."

"But there is the valet, Gustave," suggested Forster.

"He is dead long ago. He died like a true Swiss. He was paid well, and he kept the secret to the last—to the grave, and beyond it."

"And the husband of the Widow Martin, his testimony might be worth something, what of him?"

"The same story that might be told of so many brave fellows. A stormy night, a dark, frowning, iron-bound coast, as that of Normandy is, an angry sea, and the Père Martin and his little boat lost for ever. At least, so said his wife."

"Then there's no hope there," said Old Daylight. "Well, we must look out for other help—self-help, that's best."

"I've tried *that*," said Edgar, eagerly. "When the bold, open way *is* open to me, you will not find me flinch. I determined to see the Earl, my father. Robbed, betrayed, left alone to perish, as it were, in this great city, I had yet grown to strength. I would use that strength. I would stand face to face with my cruel taskmaster."

"Bravo!" cried Old Daylight. "And so you went to see the Right Honourable Philip Plumer Stanfield, Earl of Chesterton, Viscount Wimpole, Baron Edgeware, and a Baronet. Bravo! give him all his titles. You were a match for the old aristocrat."

The barrister paid no attention to the old man, but continued—

"I did not take this resolution suddenly. The more I thought of the interview, the more undecided I was. Could so weak a person as I overthrow a great lord in single combat?"

"David slew Goliath with a pebble," cried the old man, testily. "Fear not, and God will help you."

"Would he forego his troublesome guilt of thirty years? Had he not chosen his part, and determined which side to

take? Would he not laugh me to scorn, chase me from his doors, and prosecute me as a forger? These were considerations. He knew the old brag in English law, that it is the shield of the poor and the breastplate of the rich. I tell you, it is the poor man's oppressor and the toy of the rich. Moved from court to court, maddened with delay after delay, rendered furious by trick after trick, in endeavouring to gain my patrimony, I might at last have died in a madhouse!"

Here the young fellow paused, and poured out a little brandy, which he drank.

"But at last you decided?" said Old Daylight, with whom there was nothing like sticking to the point.

"After a fortnight or three weeks—for so long have I known this—of agony, of doubt and suspense, yes. One morning, after a night of torture, in which sleep brought no relief, but only sad and doleful dreams, I determined to go."

"Soh!" grunted the old *ci-devant* silversmith and watchmaker, "*that* is well."

"You know his house, I dare say. It is heavy and old, but one of the most aristocratic houses in London. It stands back in its own courtyard, and is of Grecian architecture, built of squared stone. Inside, it is a model of comfort and elegance. There is nothing there that you could wish away, nothing away that you could wish were present. A huge porter opened the little gate in the large coach gates when I rang, and filled up the space with his red waistcoat and crested buttons, so as not to let me see within. To my question, he answered, with some surliness, that my lord was not within; he was at Brighton. Fool that I was! I might have known that so great a man would have his whereabouts in the *Court Circular* and *Morning Pillar;* but I had forgotten that. However, I was determined to see some one.

"'Is no one else within?' I demanded.

"I spoke haughtily, and with some fierceness. The man was astonished.

"'Yes; the Viscount was at home. Perhaps Lord Wimpole would do as well as his father.'

"'I will see him,' I said; and I strode past the porter into the courtyard.

"A covered portico runs up on each side to the house, and in these porticoes are, I presume, the offices. The house, built by Kent or Chambers in old times, is a good specimen of bastard Grecian or Palladian architecture. A paved way runs from the lodge gate to the door, which is reached by a noble flight of steps. The porter, pulling a bell which communicated with the house, directed me to the chief entrance, which was opened as I approached."

"Chut! these aristocrats; what care they take lest the vulgar crew should intrude on them!" cried Old Daylight. "Well, when you are a gentleman, there's nothing like letting the world know that you are so."

"The footman who opened the door told me superciliously that my lord was engaged, and had left one or two names only on the slate, to the owners of which he was to be at home.

"'You know,' said the fellow, with a drawl imitated from his betters, 'you know he isn't at home to everybody.' And the fellow looked at me as if he would take my measure.

"'He will be at home to me,' said I.

"Ah! if I could have told him all, how the rascal would have started. The proud tone in which I spoke seemed to settle my friend. He took my card, read over the address, 'Mr Edgar Wade, Garden Court, Middle Temple,' and, as if satisfied, creaked up-stairs till met by a groom of the chambers, who, looking down at me, ordered me to be shown up-stairs, and then went his way. The room into which I was shown was adorned with portraits of the race of Stanfield. It was a proud and a distinguished race, distinguished not only for its mere bravery, but for its wit, its knowledge, its boldness in withstanding kings, or in aiding them. More than once it had intermarried with the royal race, than which it, indeed, proudly claimed to be better born. Oh! I know well what my ancestry is. I have studied Dodd and Edmondson since I found out this grand secret."

The young man rose, and strode almost fiercely and impatiently up and down his room.

"Well," said Daylight to himself, "pride *is* a plant of uncommon quick growth in the bosom of man. Poor human nature!"

"My black dress and fashionable costume seemed to have some effect upon this last valet, for he was very attentive."

"My lord, he said, would see me at once. Would I walk into his morning-room? but my lord begged that I would not detain him long, as he had an appointment of some moment. 'And,' said the fellow, as I thought, with an easy lie, 'I know that the carriage will be waiting for him in ten minutes.'

"All, indeed, was done like clockword—so I afterwards heard—in the house of Chesterton. The horses were kept harnessed, the carriages ready, the dinners, the breakfasts, the first appearance of my Lord Viscount, or the Earl himself, was to the minute. Great noblemen, the Earl was wont to repeat, must submit to little details. I meditated on the slavery of such a state as I followed the fellow into the armoury."

"And yet he would so gladly submit to it himself," thought Old Daylight. "Poor hum "—— but he checked himself, fanning his forehead, in his excitement, with his bandana.

"I never saw so many arms in my life. The Viscount was curious in swords, and they were arranged in the different centuries to which they belonged. Indian, Chinese, Hindoo tulwars, and Japanese swords, sharp as a razor, and ready to cut a Christian in two, hung with the weapons of the Crusaders, the long rapier of Elizabeth's days, or the rough cavalry sabre of Cromwell's Ironsides, marked with the genuine 'O. C.' The young fellow seemed to have a passion for steel. Here, on a rack, were some curious daggers; here some German foils with the true Solingen blades "——

"Foils!" said Old Daylight, with a start. "You said foils?"

"Yes. Why did you start?"

"Oh, it 's only this corn, confound it." said the old man, stooping down and pressing his slipper.

"There were pistols, too—beauties! Indeed, everything was good. In the midst was a genealogical tree, where, from the loins of Ranuldus de Castraville, in the days of the Heptarchy, the proud race of the Chestertons sprang—a race of nobles when the Conqueror was but a successful freebooter. I was looking at this when my other self, the Viscount, entered. He looked wonderfully well that day. He was dressed in a

velvet morning coat, light, well-made shoes, and loose trousers —not the very tight pantaloons, tight as we now wear. He was dressed for ease, and it well became him. I think I see him now—beautiful, radiant with health, good-nature, sweetness, looking ten years younger than I did. *He* had not thought, and read, and written, and felt as I did. His heart had never throbbed with shame, with pride, with ambition, as mine had; nor had beaten so wildly that I have put my hand upon it, as a musician does upon his harp, to deaden and to stop its vibrations. He had a grand and noble air, was about my height, very lightly built, and very smooth, supple, and joyous. Why, indeed, should he not be so? He had neither worked, suffered, nor struggled.

"'You're looking at our tree,' he said. 'That is a piece of my father's work. I am always obliged to apologise for it to strangers, and you are one, Mr Edgar Wade. By the way, I think I remember your name at the bar.'

"His soft, kind voice disarmed me. I had turned to him fiercely, as if I could have said, 'Out! base-born, out! Give me my rights, and strip away those fine feathers you have stolen.' But his courteous well-bred looks, his address as to an equal, his kindness and honest intention, as he professed that if he could he would serve me, though I know 'tis but a fashion of their courtly breed, disarmed me, and I repented of my purpose. My head fell on my chest, my arms were uplifted as if to embrace him, my lips moved, and my heart spoke: 'Would that this trial would pass away, would that I could clasp you to my heart, O Philip! O my brother!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

"*IN CAMPS OPPOSED, FALSE SHAME AND CONSCIENCE STAND.*"

"PHILIP DESVŒUX STANFIELD, Esq., commonly, and by courtesy styled the Viscount Wimpole"—— continued the barrister.

"Stop!" cried the old man, blowing his nose with violence,

and thereby indulging his method of crying; "stop a bit. I'll mix again, and a little for you."

Then he muttered to himself, "What a noble heart this young man has! I was right when I put his name in my will. And those people to keep him out of his rights, and by such means, too! There it is, my boy. A pailful of this would not hurt you; it's your brown sugar bedevilments that kill the brandy."

Mr Wade was nothing loath. He refreshed himself, and Old Daylight did so as well; then, nestling down in his chair, he prepared to listen comfortably.

"Philip," resumed the barrister, dropping for a minute his bitter tone, "seemed touched at my movements. They were but dumb motions, so they must have been eloquent with grief; for he said—

"'You have something to communicate to me, sir. What is it?'

"'Something so serious,' I answered, 'that I will not tell it here. You have several doors. Somebody might listen.'

"'Will it take long,' asked he.

"Here I at once told the Viscount that I must, at least, have the whole of an hour to speak to him. 'And,' I added, 'what I have to say is of the utmost importance both to you and to your father, the Earl. These letters,' said I, 'are of his writing.'

"The young fellow looked at the important bundle of letters with some anxiety; and, after pausing as if in thought, rang the bell, and ordered the carriage to wait for an hour. Then, leading the way into his own little study, he carefully closed the door; and placing an easy chair near the fire—for we were nearing October, and it was cold—he motioned me to sit down.

"The room, which was comfort itself—or, indeed, I may call it luxury—looked out on the ancient garden of Chesterton House; and, although suffering from the smoke of London, the garden was well kept up, and it was a pretty place. I noticed that if I fell—for I was about to play the bold game"——

"Brave boy!" cried Old Forster.

"And he might throw me out of window—I should assuredly

break my neck; for, although we were on the first floor, the ground round the basement had been deeply removed; and, to say the truth, the state rooms at Chesterton House are lofty. Lord Wimpole was somewhat about my height, as I said, and very active; and, truly, what I was about to say to him was enough to stir any one's choler. I sat but a moment, and then I arose—

"'I hope, my lord,' said I, giving him his courtesy title, 'that you will not proceed to any extremes upon what I am about to say to you.'

"He looked at me with extreme surprise, somewhat puzzled.

"'My mission,' I continued, 'is a very painful one—very painful indeed. Nothing that you can do or say now can affect it. It has passed into the regions of history. Therefore, let not what I shall say move you to'——

"'My dear sir,' interrupted he, with a good-natured and somewhat proud look upon his manly, upturned face—for his surprise had given way and his feelings had rallied—'what can you or any one say to my father's son that'——

"'Exactly. You have cut the difficulty. Learn, sir, that you are *not* the legitimate son of the Earl of Chesterton.' I kept my eyes fixed upon his as I said this, and saw a gleam of fury shoot from them, and expected him to spring at my throat. Then the gleam died down, and a pallor gradually crept up on his face, as I continued: 'And these letters that I have here will prove what I say. The real heir still lives; and sent by him, I come here. In these writings you will'——

"'Give them to me,' said he, in a voice short, sharp, and painfully altered by emotion.

"I did so at once."

"Phew! and a fire burning in his room, right before him!" cried the old criminal philosopher.

"Ah!" said his companion, "Lord Wimpole is a gentleman; besides"—and this the wicked Old Daylight thought was much more to the purpose—"I stood between him and the grate, and my eye was fixed on his.

"'Before you begin,' I cried, 'let me save you unnecessary pain.'

"'You are too good, sir,' said he, with a bow, and with bitter irony.

"'At any rate,' I said, 'I have some right to be an executioner—no right to be a butcher. These hundred and twenty letters would simply kill you, without doing you any good. Please read only those passages that I have marked in blue ink.' For," said Edgar, "I took the same trouble for him that I did for you. I shortened his punishment by letting him read only those that were of importance. Oh! I can assure you, my old friend, that was enough. My eyes, fixed upon his face, watched his smallest movements. I told you how well he looked when I first saw him. In less than ten minutes you would have fancied him a convalescent from a fever hospital. Taking his white silk pocket-handkerchief, he put it first to his mouth, then in it, biting the thick folds of silk in his agony; but he let no word escape him. Thick drops of sweat, drops of agony, gathered on his forehead; his hands trembled; his lips turned white; his very hair, which was crisp and curled when he came to welcome me, seemed to grow weak and lank before me."

"Poor devil!" said the old man.

"Yes," cried Edgar, as if to forestall his pity, "I pitied him—I, even I, who had been so much injured. But he showed marvellous pluck—a bitter and a costly bravery. Had he uttered one word, I should have flung my arms round his neck and cried, 'Philip, are you not my brother? Let us forget all. Remain where you are. I have been inured to toil and strife. I can endure difficulty and privation. Let us only recognise, know, and love each other!'"

Worn by his emotions, the barrister walked up and down his room, taking the stage much as Mr Kean, the great tragedian of the day, did, when he cried out, in "Richard the Third"—

—— "Shadows to-night
Have wrought more terror on the soul of Richard."

Old Daylight watched his adopted son with delight.

"Go on, go on, my boy," he murmured. And then, to himself, he said, "But his wonderful generosity will make a fool of him."

"But then," continued Edgar, "a very black and guilty reflection—so I take it—made me pause. I have been edu-

cated into caution; and as I was about to play the generous fool, and burn the letters myself, something whispered, 'Those letters, once burnt, what becomes of your evidence? Lord Wimpole might turn round and laugh at you.'"

"Ah," said Forster, drawing a long breath, and somewhat relieved, "there *is* that reflection to be made. The boy is all right," he cogitated. "Now this is what I call a man—a brain to reflect, a heart to feel, a hand to execute. Dash my old wig!" said he to himself, in a state of great triumph, "this is the man for my money; just like myself when I was a boy. But where are your young men now?" (Here the old gentleman gave a vacant look round the apartment, as much as to say, that the young men at present did not exist, and that nature had been remiss in furnishing that article.) "Why, dash my wig! they are all Tom and Jerrying, knocking down old Charleys, and chevying the New Police when they see 'em. Oh, they can chaff a cabman, fight a ticket-porter, or get into Fleet Prison. But for young men—bah!"

Edgar had paused while the old man's rapid thoughts were regretting the good old times of his youth; and the barrister had fixed his eyes on dreamy vacancy, as if debating whether the generous pathway he had pointed out would not have been the best to have trodden. Then he suddenly went on, speaking more rapidly than before.

"At last the reading of those letters was finished, and Philip Stanfield, with haughty determination and an immense struggle, which, in spite of his pride, I could see, arose and put the letters in my hand. He did this frankly, even with a certain boldness.

"'If,' he said, and he emphasised the word, '*if* these letters were written by my father, then, sir, your suggestion is just: *I* am not the son of the Countess of Chesterton. Have you any other proofs?'

"I was startled at his asking for more. 'I have compared the writing,' I answered, 'and it *is* that of your father. Proofs are in this house. You have the valet Gustave—a confidential servant, no doubt—he has not left you.'

"'Gustave,' said the young nobleman, 'died two or three years ago. Your sneer is quite right, sir, he was a confidential

servant to the end. My father was with him when he died. What secrets he had he carried with him, even beyond the grave.'"

"Just what you said," interrupted Old Forster. "Ah, if we could only get on the other side of *that*, what secrets we should know!"

"'Then,' said I, 'the only other witness is the old nurse, Estelle Martin. I have ascertained from the papers of Madame Wade that she lives at Kensal-Green.'"

"Eh!" cried the old Bow Street amateur, opening his eyes somewhat wider, and rising as he looked at Edgar. "What said he to *that?*"

"Not much," replied the barrister, carelessly, while Old Forster, playing with his red bandana, watched him with interest. "Not much. His face fell a little, and he owned freely that he knew the name.

"'It is a woman whom I have seen,' he said. 'She lives at a little house called Acacia Villa. I have been there with my father,' he continued, slowly, as if the words were wrung from him; 'and I have seen him pay money to her. He told me that her husband had done him good service.'

"'There, then,' I cried, triumphantly; 'there, then, is a coincidence which you must, at least, say is strange. I claim that woman as my witness.'"

"'Phew!" whistled Forster; "and what did my lord say to *that?* You had him in a cleft stick *there.*"

"He did not answer for some time," continued Edgar; "and then, after patting the ground for some time with his foot, he looked up suddenly into my face, and rising, stood opposite me.

"'Tell me,' he said—looking on me as does an artist who takes your portrait—'tell me this one thing: do you, *Mr Edgar Wade*'—the name he emphasised—'do you know the true and lawful son of the Earl of Chesterton?'

"'I do,' I answered, too much moved to conceal anything; 'I do know him, and *I—am he!*'

"The young man's head fell upon his breast, and he trembled; but it was only for a moment.

"'I do not doubt it,' he said; 'I have had a presentiment

of something of the sort for some moments.' Then he took my hand, and, in an almost inarticulate voice, murmured, 'My brother, I am satisfied that it should be so.'"

"Noble words," ejaculated Old Daylight—"noble words, no doubt. But what of words? What were his actions?"

"Spare him," said Edgar, in a tone of reproach; "he was and is to be pitied. He has fallen from his high estate. The little things that he despised have become dear to him; those which he thought luxuries have grown into necessities. Brought up amidst delicacies, which his soft soul has yet to be weaned from, the prospect before him is dreadful. He knows the truth. Comprehend, Mr Forster, the poor man's struggle—who cannot keep his position but with a guilty knowledge. The Nemesis has, indeed, come upon the house of Chesterton. And he, Philip, my brother, is more to be pitied than I."

"My dear Edgar—my lord, I shall call you, for you are a lord," babbled Old Forster, full of feeling, and delighted with the goodness the barrister had exhibited—"*I* quite comprehend it all. I know the struggle. I, you see—I have read a good deal—Dash my wig! I shall let it all out" (this was said aside)—"and I know how a man's soul is shaken when he is suddenly brought face to face with a strong temptation."

"Temptation?" asked the barrister, as if Old Forster was wandering from the point.

"Yes, temptation. You see, he might wish to get you off your guard and to burn those letters."

"Oh, no! He behaved like one of a noble house, poor fellow, although on the wrong side. You see, he has as much blood of the Chestertons in his veins as I have."

"How blindly this generous young man excuses him!" thought Forster. "But there, that was to have been foreseen by the true inductive process. Given a fellow of such generous, noble ideas"——

"At last," continued Edgar, "for I must end my story, and we must get to bed—at last, after a long, long silence—in which I was torn by different emotions, and in which I watched the autumn leaves fall in the London garden outside: they fall only here—the young lord arose, and drawing himself up, said—

"'Mr Edgar Wade—for so you are called *at present*'—the words stuck in his throat a bit—'you must excuse me if I ask time to consider what to do. Ten years, or even five years ago, I should have at once admitted your rights, and should have retired to some far-off settlement, or to the New World, there to have built up a name for myself, and in that New World to have forgotten the sorrows of the Old. But now I am of mature age; and age, if it makes us wiser, makes us less generous. And even though I be like one struck with a thunderbolt from a clear sky, but yet by some miracle alive, I must reflect, and I must consult the Earl, my father. Give me leave to say that I feel my position deeply; but also that I feel for you. The Earl will come from the Continent in eight or nine days. I will tell him all. You shall see him. And if all this is—as I suspect it is—true, then justice shall be done you. Pray, sir, make no mistake. My word has been as good as my bond hitherto, and shall be yet. Here are your letters; keep them carefully. They have cost me all, but—pray, sir, leave me. I will send for you in eight or ten days. I can say no more. I wish to be alone.'"

"And that was all?" asked Forster.

"All!" cried the barrister. "Could any one have said more? Was it not noble?"

"My dear boy," said old Tom Forster, rising, and taking his brandy bottle, previous to saying good night, "it was more than noble, it was superhuman; but take care of those letters."

And with another yawn and a caution, he hobbled off, muttering to himself, "Yes, he was right; justice shall be done him, justice—justice to both."

CHAPTER IX.

LADY SARK'S PROTÉGÉE, AND HOW SHE CAME BY HER.

THE inductive philosopher went to bed very much pleased with himself: all the more so because, having upon some pretence returned to Edgar's room, and by delicate processes of

investigation found that the young man wanted money, he had boldly almost forced upon him some five hundred pounds as a loan, pretending that he did not care to have so much loose money in the house. The success of this little venture tickled him immensely; and the clever way in which he overcame the delicate scruples of Edgar was, in Old Forster's opinion, a perfect triumph of tact.

"You see," he said to himself, "barristers are always poor till they begin to rise. Egad, they are as thin and lank as a bagpipe before it is inflated. But once blow them up—once let them make a noise in the world, and hey! presto! everything is open to them. And what a wonderful fellow it is! I always thought there was something noble about him. Dash my wig, blood will out! And then as to the other"——

Here Old Daylight, as he tucked himself up in bed, with his silk bandana tied neatly round his head, with a formidable knot on his forehead, chuckled and crowed over his inductive process; and, muttering something very contemptuous about Brownjohn and his clue, tried to sleep.

It was several hours, however, before he fell asleep; and then, even then, the dreams of the old man haunted and disturbed him, chased him all the night, and made him start and cry, as if he were struggling with the real murderer, whom they were bringing to condign punishment. For in those happy days, when London was not the big wen it is now, and Queen Anne Street, in the haying time, smelt of the hay from Regent's Park—then but a wilderness of fields—there was not the slightest doubt about hanging a murderer. The innocent Old Daylight, *alias* Tom Forster, absolutely thought that he was doing man and God service in tracking crime, and in bringing the villain to justice.

Let Tom Forster sleep in his comfortable bed, struggling with uncomfortable dreams, in which Mr Samuel Brownjohn, police officer, always gets the victory over him, and laughs him to scorn, while we visit Mr George Horton, barrister and police magistrate. He, too, is at rest, in his house in Wimpole Street; he, too, is dreaming, and curiously, not of the crime of the day, but of love.

Crime he well knew, having studied it more deeply even

than Tom Forster, and having, at a certain period of his life, felt impelled to commit some great and daring villany, and then to destroy himself. That temptation and its result—a result full of honour to him—made him more lenient in his judgments, a sadder and a wiser man, and one well fitted, indeed, for the post he held.

Mr Horton's colleague, Mr Boom, was one of those rough and ready barristers, who are more like country justices than town magistrates; one who was not very learned in the law, but acute, sharp, full of knowledge of life, and a certain sort of good nature.

At the St Marylebone Police Court, therefore, people got two different sorts of law "turned on," as the excellent Inspector Stevenson said, but both good in their way. For chaffing a saucy cabman, dealing with a beau who was found drunk and disorderly, or a gallant young officer or medical student, who had been out Tom and Jerry fashion, no one so clever as Mr Boom. His days were observed and reported in the *Morning Chronicle*, and were almost as amusing as the fictitious "Mornings at Bow Street," a popular series of sketches which were founded, perhaps, upon them. But having humiliated the prisoner, and punished him in court, Mr Boom did not punish him in prison. If he gave the culprits "talkee, talkee," as the nigger said, he did not give them "floggee, floggee," too; and, on the whole, they were well satisfied, and public justice done. Mr Boom did not care for a great or an abstruse case. When such came up, he would, by remand or otherwise, shift them to his more intellectual colleague, and enjoy his ease and dignity at his comfortable little box near Epsom.

Mr Boom, it need not be said, was a popular man about Marylebone. Even the rogues, with that innate respect for justice and English law which they have, rather liked the good-humoured magistrate. He talked to them in their own language—in his leisure hours he was editing and adding to an edition of "Grove's Slang Dictionary"—and gave them the exact term they guessed. Sometimes they would set their wits against his, and hope, by letting him gain an easy victory, to flatter his "wutchup." But he was quite up to that dodge.

He was very good-natured. He looked upon crime as an eccentricity incidental to "poor human nature," and was very lenient with it in the young.

Mr Horton, on the other hand, took a very much higher view of his duties, and was very severe with the young, and much more lenient with those who had previously fallen. He knew what a terrible net sin spreads; how easily one was entangled; how hard it was for one who had fallen to stand upright. And yet the acute brain of this good man was not employed upon law, nor upon the study of his life—crime, but upon love. Shakespeare, so wise, so sound, so true to nature, is not always right: the lawyer does not always dream of fees, nor the soldier of cutting throats, "of carbonadoes and big Spanish oaths;" but the Queen Mab of dreams sometimes leads one into the Court of Venus and her loves.

And yet the magistrate's dreams were very sad, and rehearsed only a past history, which was shortly as follows, and intimately connected with this true narration. He had been, he was, deeply, almost inextricably, in love with a young lady most people of good taste would fall in love with too.

A barrister of good family, and although only thirty—marvellous to relate—in a remarkably good practice, Mr Horton, a scion of the Hortons of Shropshire, who were baronets in King James's time, and had furnished a long list of knights in the times of the Plantagenets, went, of course, into excellent society. Amongst the houses he visited was one in Green Street, Park Lane, which willingly he never would have entered but for one thing, and that one thing took him there every night. And that was Winifred Vaughan.

The house was a pinched-up, pretty little house—quite a town box; but large enough for a "female bachelor," as old Lady Sark called herself. She was, in fact, the dowager Countess of a happily deceased and poor earl, of a Scotch family, though not a Scotch title, who was as proud as the Countess herself, and almost as disagreeable. His wife, however, in power, in temper, and in selfish and odious qualities, surpassed him; and being conquered, the poor man very wisely died. As the Countess was by no means rich, only fairly good-looking, and very unfairly disagreeable, she did *not* marry

again—of which she made a great virtue—and, in consequence, remained Marguerite, Countess of Sark. Sweet and excellent woman! from how much suffering did she free at least one poor man by her enforced resolution!

Unhappily for the world, as she thought, there was no offspring; and the childless woman sank into a dowager, and had all the bitter feelings dowagers have. Friends passed her by, and welcomed the much prettier, nicer, and younger Countess—the real Countess, as the tradesmen called her—the wife of a younger and altogether better brother, who had the audacity not only to succeed to the title, but to give the cold shoulder, in that thoroughly efficient way which your true aristocrat can give, to his sister-in-law. Henceforth there was a deadly feud; and as the present descendant of the M'Ivors who wore the coronet was wise enough to repair his poor estate by marrying a very pretty, gentle, and rich English girl, with nearly half a million of money, and generous enough to love and honour his wife as his greatest benefactress, it need not be said that the feud amounted to a vendetta. The young Lady Sark, whose name was seen in the lists of so many assemblies—and also, let it be said, of so many charities—was generally spoken of in Green Street as "that woman," the "upstart," the "haymaker's daughter." The last title, an ingenious invention of the Countess Marguerite's, was derived from the fact that Mr Evelyn, the father of the heiress, an old English gentleman and farmer, had his head screwed on the right way, as the Surrey Evelyns, as a rule, have; and during the wars with Napoleon undertook the contract of supplying the troops with hay. Having money at command, he bought hay largely in the south of England; stored, shipped, and delivered it; and not only had a very useful and healthy occupation, but made a very large fortune, which his daughter inherited, along with his handsome English face, shrewd sense, and straightforward manner.

The haymaker's daughter was a great favourite with Winifred Vaughan—"Who was no relation at all to her, thank God!" said the Dowager—but who had the inestimable benefit of having the blood of the Stuarts, Tudors, and Plantagenets flowing in her veins. She, too, lived in Green Street, near the

Park; she, too, enjoyed—no, hardly enjoyed, gentle as she was—the society of Marguerite, Countess of Sark, and the high society she invited; for she, Winifred Vaughan, was the niece of Lady Sark.

For Mrs Vaughan—or, more respectfully, to give her her courtesy title, the Lady Letitia Vaughan—who had married a poor clergyman out of pure love, was a duke's daughter, and own sister to the proud Countess. They were just as different as sisters can be. Mrs Lettice Vaughan, as she preferred to be called, had somehow scraped up all the modesty, retirement, and humility of the Duke's family, and was fool enough to be wonderfully contented and happy in a little parsonage—the very smallest of the poor Duke's many livings; for he sold his presentations and his game, and really could not afford to give them away, even to his silly daughter. Yes, wonderfully happy there in the north of England, among mountains and lakes, a simple population, one or two poor poets, some very old simple gentry, and poor women who soon learned to love her very dearly—Mrs Vaughan passed her peaceful life. It was not a very long one. She was faithful over her one talent, the delight and sole sustaining power of her husband—a deep student, but a man weak of health and overworked in brain—and was so good on earth that she was early called away; and in this way.

Mrs Vaughan had one or two children, but they did not live, and then one which did; and this baby, which was christened Winifred—"an honoured Saxon name," said Mr Vaughan—was the delight of both mother and father. But the mother was stricken with a fell disease and died, when her daughter was six years old. The loss was too much for the poor parson. He grew silent, feeble, and even wandered at the funeral, and talked about "the light of his life;" when, as everybody proved to demonstration, a parson ought to have another light. And, indeed, Parson Vaughan had; but after that cruel blow he grew more fearful of Providence, less hopeful, and less trustful. And, indeed, in six years—after he had taught Winifred Vaughan Latin, some Greek and Italian, and a great deal of fine theological English—he died outright; having been half dead ever since his wife

changed this life for a better. And when the parson and his wife lay side by side in the little Cumberland churchyard, their closed eyes turned to the eternal heavens, the orphan girl—straight, tall, and stalwart; reserved, yet gay; full of life, yet staid; simple, yet wise; a mountain ash in strength, grace, and suppleness, and beauty—was adopted by "that cranky old girl," as one of the circle called her, the Countess of Sark.

"What an excellent thing for Winifred Vaughan!" said the world; and of course the world was in the right.

CHAPTER X.

DEALINGS WITH THE "ARGUS" NEWSPAPER.

LADY SARK gained a good deal of applause amongst her immediate friends by her adoption of Winifred Vaughan; and it is not improbable that this kind of recompense was not unpleasant to her ladyship. She was a thorough old worldling, and discounted the reward charitable people look for in the next world by taking as much comfort, applause, glory, and credit to herself as she could in this. If we were not charitable, we might hint that there are others not unlike her.

At the time we write of—in the March previous to the murder of Estelle Martin, which, as the reader will remember, took place on the 29th of September 1829—Mr George Horton, who was not then appointed magistrate for Marylebone, was a frequent visitor to Green Street, and came there ostensibly with the purpose of playing a rubber of whist with the dowager Countess.

But it happened that Winifred Vaughan was the usual companion of that excellent woman. She was cheaper than one of those hired ladies, who seem somehow to be always in the way and out of place, however amiable they may be. She was more willing and more clever; and though so observant that she saw pretty well through Lady Sark's motives, yet she was so generous that she pieced out with sweet charity what that old lady wanted—which was a good deal.

Miss Winifred Vaughan was very beautiful, very accomplished—which really count for nothing in her circle—very well born, and very poor, which count for a good deal. She had many admirers, but none entirely fitted to her. They who were eager to marry were a great deal too poor; and they who were excellently well fitted with estates, titles, and money, were inclined to look around them before they selected their—partners for life. And even then they looked for money.

"Egad!" said the richest duke in the kingdom, "egad! those millowner fellows are getting so powerful, that we must put money to money to be equal to them."

And the young fellows were evidently impregnated with this idea, and moved about in splendid selfishness, leaving Winifred Vaughan, and a dozen other such amiable creatures, waiting in the sickness of hope deferred.

That is, the world supposed that they *were* so kept; and the world composed of dowagers did not hesitate to blame the selfishness of the young men. But as the young men cared nothing about the dowagers, the effect was by no means astounding.

One young nobleman, indeed—and the very pick of all the "matches" upon which the voracious dowagers were, by the verdict of the veracious world, supposed to have set their hearts—set his heart upon Winifred Vaughan, and would have offered her his hand; but it was whispered—and it is astonishing how thoroughly in high life everybody understands everybody else's motives—that Lord Chesterton had told Lord Wimpole that if he married the niece of old Sark, "he would cut off the entail, or go on the turf." Certain it was that, at the time we write of, Winifred Vaughan was nearly twenty years old, and unmarried.

Lady Sark, whose house was not very crowded by the aristocracy—that class having a natural preference to those places whereat something is to be seen, or some gaiety is going on—fell to opening her house to the gentry—an inferior class, but glad to go where there was a title, and sometimes exhibiting an independent, a learned, and a pleasant member of their own set. One of these was Mr George Horton.

This quiet, silent, studious, and observant man was not usually a "party" man, but he was always to be found at the Countess's assemblies. He was attentive—respectful even—to the old lady, and a gentleman. It is true that the poor fellow actually did something for his living; but Lady Sark forgave him *that*—he could play at whist.

He was, too, quite aware—for the gossip of one circle had sunk down to a lower—that Lord Wimpole had proposed and failed. For did he not read the *Morning Pillar*, in which a superior kind of Barnett Slammers did the fashionable reporting, and from whose pen the report had dropped—gracefully and even poetically garnished, but yet unmistakably given?

No one could accuse Mr Coaster—the reporter alluded to—of indelicacy. He threw always a veil over the sins and follies of the aristocracy. But the veil was of gauze, everything was seen *through* it. It hid nothing; but rather, like the veils which cover the beauties of the harem, it gave a grace to that which it never even pretended to conceal. It is well known that other and inferior penmen were jealous of this gentleman, and declared that he waited at the tables of the great in livery, with silver shoulder-knots and red plush inexpressibles; but that we know was untrue. Mr Coaster might have been at their feasts in spirit, but he was never there in person. How he managed to pick up so many reports was, indeed, a wonder. The head of a family was first apprised of matters going on in his own household through the columns of the *Morning Pillar*.

But, besides the *Pillar*, there were at the time in full vigour two newspapers which dealt exclusively in matters interesting to the aristocracy. "And were, by consequence," said Barnett Slammers, who was an out-and-out Radical, "nasty and blackguard." These were the *Satirist* and the *Argus*. But it was unfair of Barnett to connect these things with the House of Lords. All the connection that they and their proprietors had with that august assembly was simply of that temporary kind which a highwayman has with the person whose money he demands. The demand made in that simple time, only forty years ago, was this—"Please, your lordship, we have

discovered a hole in the cloak in which your virtue is wrapped; and if you do not plaster it, we will point out to the ridicule-loving world where that hole is." In nine cases out of ten, this method was found to be efficacious.

To the office of one of these satirical journals—now happily extinct—Lord Wimpole one morning walked, and asked for the editor.

The little boy who served the office as clerk, folder, and general dispenser of a free—very free—newspaper, with the precocious intellect natural to newsboys, at once divined the cause. Lord Wimpole was unmistakably a gentleman; but the very soft voice in which he asked for the editor did not conceal an amount of irritation which the young gentleman did all he could to repress.

"Editor never comes 'ere, sir," said the boy. "He's at 'is country 'ouse."

"Then, doubtless, the publisher's at home. I have called on a matter connected with the paper. I have met Dr M'Phie, who, I believe, writes for it."

This threw the boy off his guard.

"My eyes!" he said to himself, "why he's an author may be. Wot a swell!"

Then, after a little more scrutiny—during which he directed some wrappers, for the paper had a country circulation—he asked—

"Wot name, sir? P'r'aps Mr Rolt is at home. I'll go and see."

Lord Wimpole did not give his card.

"You can say," he said, carelessly, while his heart beat a little more quickly, "that I am a person who knows the Doctor."

Now the Doctor, a clever fellow—a Trinity College man of Dublin—wrote for his bread; and, being at that time in the Fleet—did not care very much—nor did he care much even when out of that place of durance—to whom he sold his articles, full of scholarship, and with a certain *verve* and "swing" about them that made them very readable. The Doctor, it must be owned, had no more to do with the "spicy" little articles which sold the paper than had Lord

Wimpole himself; but he had an easy conscience, and did not think that he was by any means guilty of the miserable scandal which produced the black-mail by which the Doctor was paid.

"Mr Rolt," said the boy, "'ere 's a regular swell asking for you. He 's an author,' I think, for he knows, and is a friend of, Dr M'Phie."

Mr Rolt had a severe headache. He was a handsome, fair, somewhat bald, and fashionably-dressed man. He had been dining out with some theatrical people and the proprietor of the newspaper, and had made an eloquent speech, in which he called the press the "palladium of British liberty, and the protector of the purity of the nation." All this Mr T. Lilburn Rolt firmly believed it to be. He had said it so many times before, that the sentence rolled out of his mouth like a familiar truth.

Lord Wimpole was duly ushered in. Mr Rolt—who devoutly wished that his aching head was under a pump, and that the little dinner at Thames Ditton had never taken place—saw, in spite of his headache, that Lord Wimpole was no gentleman of the press; but he still carried the idea suggested by the office-boy, that the stranger, who did not give his name, had come to ask for money for the imprisoned genius, M'Phie.

Motioning Lord Wimpole to a chair, and passing his hand over his heavy eyes, he said—

"I can divine your mission, sir; but I must explain to you beforehand that our eccentric and very clever friend has no claim upon this paper. He has, in fact, overdrawn his salary. He has been paid beforehand for three leaders. Let me see! One on the 'Bishops'"——

Lord Wimpole held up his hand.

"Pray, sir," he said, "tell me no more. I have no desire and no right to know the secrets of your paper. I do not call upon Dr M'Phie's business; indeed, I only used his name as a passport to reach you. I do not pretend to be in his secrets, as I have only met him once."

Mr Rolt saw that he was caught. His headache made him rude and ill-natured. He rose at once and put his hand on the bell.

"Then, sir," he answered, in a loud tone, "then why "——

"No rudeness, sir," said Lord Wimpole. "Here is my business. I wanted to see the editor. I wanted him to answer for that paragraph."

And he threw down a paper in which, surrounded by a line of red ink, and sent to Chesterton House—by some good-natured friend of the family, no doubt—there was a notice to the effect that the "Delectable Dowager of Sark had at last caught a young nobleman. We believe we may tell Mrs Grundy and the public that the name of the rash young man is Lord —— What will the proud Earl of Ch—t—n say to the heir of his house being united to the daughter of a penniless curate, Miss ——? We shall say more about this."

As Mr Rolt gazed in a somewhat dazed fashion at this paragraph—every word of which he well knew—the young gentleman drew himself up and said——

"I am Lord Wimpole. I demand that the paragraph be contradicted. What has the world to do with the private concerns of my family?"

"Then the paragraph is not true?" asked Mr Rolt, evasively, to gain time.

"True or not true, it concerns not the public, and is no business of yours."

"But truth, my lord," said his interlocutor, with a greasy smile, "is the especial business of the British press. That palladium of liberty lives but to disseminate the truth. We received that paragraph from a member of one of the first families."

"Give me the name of your informant."

"Well, not exactly, my lord. We do not do things that way."

"Then apologise and retract."

"Assure us that it is not true, and we will at once do so—for a consideration."

"What consideration can be more weighty with you than your honour—than your desire not to circulate a scandal?"

"Well," said Mr Rolt, after a pause, in which he measured his opponent—a well-built young man, firmly set upon his legs, and an officer—"well"—here his smile became more seductive,

not to say greasy—"well, the British press cannot well live upon honour."

"It cannot exist without it, or will not for any time, sir," said the young lord, fiercely. "But I see you trifle. What consideration do you desire?"

There was a lofty scorn in his tone that irritated Mr Rolt even more than the throbbing headache, which the excitement of the conversation increased. Duelling was not quite out of fashion; and Mr Rolt, who was a gentleman—of a sort—and of the press, did not want courage, and had more than once smelt powder at Chalk Farm; and he was in such a temper that he would have braved another encounter, especially with a lord. But discretion was his best part to play, and so he answered, after a pause—

"Well, the paper wants advertising; and if your lordship will take two thousand copies at full price—for we shall have them stamped—and distribute them *gratis*, all that you complain of shall be unsaid."

"Fifty pounds," said his lordship, in a tone of unconcern.

"Yes, fifty pounds," returned Mr Rolt, in a more bland voice. "Very little, very little; and we give you the full value—quite the full value. Copies of the paper, sixpence each, stamped sevenpence. Really, we can hardly do it at that price!"

Mr Rolt put his fingers in the arm-holes of his white waistcoat, and sat down in his chair with the air of one who had conferred a favour on his new acquaintance.

Then it was that the contempt of Lord Wimpole reached its highest point. He drew out his cheque-book, and wrote the order for the money, handed it over to Mr Rolt, and, whirling round his glove, gave him the cheque.

"Now, sir," said he, "as you have shown yourself the responsible person of this atrocious paper, let me tell you what I think of you. You are worse than a highwayman! You a *gentleman* of the press! You are a common scoundrel that levies black-mail! I give you this money" (here he flung the cheque on the table) "to save a dear young lady, whom I respect, from annoyance; but I tell you that you are a robber

and a tittle-tattle slanderer! And, if you ever come across my path"——

"What!" shouted Rolt, in a voice of thunder, getting up from his easy cane chair, which was upon castors, and pushing it behind him. "Do you want to fight, my lord?"

"Oh, no," said Lord Wimpole, with a sneer and a laugh; "by no means. I will not fight you, I will thrash you."

And he threw his glove with some force in his face. The newspaper hero, with an oath, struck wildly out; but Lord Wimpole, with a well-planted blow in Mr Rolt's left eye, sent him spinning back upon his easy chair, and the deceptive castors gliding away, Mr Rolt fell heavily as Lord Wimpole left the room. Mr Rolt's account for his black eye, a few days afterwards—he left for his home at Turnham-Green in ten minutes in a hackney coach, and was tenderly nursed by his wife—was that, after that confounded dinner at Thames Ditton, he had knocked his head against a post. But the boy, who had his ears about him, told an exaggerated story of the battle to a select circle of friends. Let it be said, to Mr Rolt's honour, that, while the cheque was duly cashed and the eye was black, the retractation appeared, carefully and even politely worded. But, as the Earl of Chesterton told his son, with whom he remonstrated, "his violent behaviour would only cause the scandal to spread;" and more people would hear of the matter than he thought, or than would have heard had he been quiet. And surely enough, Lady Sark herself communicated the first news to Mr Horton, and showed him the carefully worded retractation in the *Argus*.

Mr Horton read the words with a beating heart, and took the paragraph in one of the meanings into which it was capable of construction.

"Lord Wimpole, then," he said, "withdraws from any intention as regards your niece."

"So the paper says," tittered Lady Stark. "I am sure I don't know. These people will write and talk of *nous autres*."

She was quite proud of the *esclandre*, and bought some copies of the paper to send to her friends; for she by no means desired that her niece should make a grand match.

"Then I have hopes?" said Mr Horton.

"Hopes! Of course, all you men have! What hopes, you silly creature?"

"Why, Lady Sark, you cannot have been so unobservant as not to see that I love your niece, Miss Winifred Vaughan!"

Mr Horton said this so fiercely and earnestly, that Lady Sark was quite startled. She had even thought that Mr Horton's visits were intended for her. How do we know why people come to our houses? Sometimes to see the host, of course—sometimes the hostess. Sometimes the pretty visitor at Smith's house causes so many to call and drink his wine, and send Mrs Smith boxes for the theatre, to which she will carry the pretty visitor. Lady Sark was deeply hurt.

"So you love Winifred Vaughan, do you? Umph! Well, I am sure!" (This was a favourite exclamation of her ladyship's.) "Of course I did not expect her to marry all the Chesterton property and estates; but, Mr Horton, she is my niece, and I think she might look higher than a poor barrister!"

CHAPTER XI.

"SO HATE TREADS CLOSELY ON THE HEELS OF LOVE."

LADY SARK was one of those who, having said a very nasty and spiteful thing, suddenly remember that they may find the person insulted of some use, and therefore withdraw, and do what they can to plaster the wound. Mr Horton was useful to her, procured for her boxes for the opera and bouquets of flowers, and she could not, therefore, well afford to quarrel with him.

Seeing his face turn very pale at the insult, the dowager put out her hand, and conceded everything with—

"Well, I'm sure, I ought not to talk of poverty, seeing how poor I am for a peeress. You are a gentleman, and one of ancient blood; so I don't know that it is so very bad. And you lawyers, too, do rise. I recollect that Lord Bubbington's father was a barber, and he himself an attorney's clerk; but when he became Lord Chancellor, why a duke's daughter

wasn't too high for him. Yes, you have my consent, Mr Horton. You may go and speak to her now; you will find her in the music-room."

The barrister, forgiving all this rude and senseless chatter, which her ladyship took for wit, ran upon the wings of love, as she afterwards said, to the music-room, and there found the room—but it was empty. Two or three airs from a favourite opera were on the piano; on the table, the gloves and collar of Winifred Vaughan. Mr Horton could have taken them up and kissed them; but he never permitted himself scenes, even in private. He stood looking at them, in painful supense, and yet in joyful hope, for his heart dilated and closed again with the frequent recurrence of such feelings; when Winifred entered, in a large flop Leghorn hat, with blue side ribands, and bows large enough to make at least fifty modern bonnets. The young lady wore a muslin dress, with blue sprigs, cut straight to a high waist, where it was fastened by a broad blue silk sash; very pretty shoes and sandals; half-sleeves, puffed; and long, very light blue silk gloves, which came up her arms to the elbow.

Mr Horton thought he had never seen so elegant a dress nor so pretty a girl.

He stood so still, that she hardly noticed him; and taking off the Leghorn hat, swung it in her hands, while a shower of dark brown curls, with a warm tinge of red in them, fell upon her white, full shoulders and neck. Then, turning round, upright and straight as a fawn, she darted upon Mr Horton, and placing both her hands in his, seemed to dance with joy to see him.

"Oh, I am so glad, so very glad! I thought we were going to be quite dull; but now we sha'n't be."

A flush of deep pleasure spread over the barrister's cheek.

"So glad are you, Miss Winifred? I am happy that I see you are!"

"*Miss* Winifred! Call me Winny, or Winifred, not Miss. It does not seem as if we were the dear master and pupil that we are. Why have you come so early? Can't you come as early every day in the week? Did you see aunty?"

"I have something to tell you, Winifred," said the barrister,

drawing a chair. "That is number one. Then number two is No. I can only come so early on especial business. I have a great deal of work, and I mean to work harder and harder. Number three is soon disposed of. I did see your aunt."

He had sat down opposite Winifred; and somehow, as she drew a long silk glove from one of the whitest, softest, and prettiest arms in the world, she had stretched out her hand to him, which he had caught and retained. She allowed him to do so with perfect innocence, and looked up into his earnest eyes with pride and pleasure that so good, so clever a man should be her friend.

"You see," said the barrister, "that I am come to you for help. I am much older than you—ever so much older. I am an old man."

Winifred, who, with the sweet honour of youth, only saw in age something to love and respect, did not gainsay the barrister's words; and this little reticence of hers somehow hurt him not a little—so vain, so sensitive is a man when he is in love. He went on with his speech.

"I am thirty; you are nineteen. There is a vast difference between us, and yet I come to consult you. Do you know why?"

"Because you love and trust me, I hope," said Winifred, in the purest innocence.

"Because I love and trust you," answered Mr Horton. "Because I can live no longer alone, and am determined—for the future stretches bright before me—to work *with* a wife, rather than *for* a wife in the future; to make her my companion in my schemes, my plans, and my ambition. And we barristers, Winifred, may indulge in such. It is fourteen years ago since the war closed, and the folly of ambition was fitly checked upon a bloody field. Since then we have had an era of peace and progress; but how little has been done for mankind! With how great follies and anomalies our laws yet bristle? How great would he be who made Equity"——

"What is Equity, Mr Horton?" said stupid Winifred, drinking in every word of his speech, and looking at him with fond admiring eyes.

"Equity, Winifred," said the barrister, rising and standing before her, "is law reconstrued by the dictates of Justice."

"And is not law justice, then?" said the wondering young lady.

"Not always. Law is a science, and must be construed according to precedent. But"—— Here he paused; the conversation was not taking the precise course he could have wished. "Winifred," he said, solemnly, after a time, as if collecting himself for an effort, "there is a glorious future before that man who, rising from the ranks of the law, will remedy the abuses of the law. And what cannot a man do when aided by her he loves! Her approval will outweigh the voice of fame—the empty huzzas of the mob; and, having struggled and succeeded, he may, in my noble profession—for indeed it is noble—lay a coronet at the feet of her whom he loves! Help me, Winifred! Be the companion of my toil, the reward of my labour. Winifred, I love you!"

He knelt at her feet as he said this. He seized her hand, and covered it with kisses. She drew it away hurriedly, covered her face with her hands, and, standing before him, cried out—

"O Mr Horton! don't—don't say that you love me! You are a good honourable man, and I love you; but I love you as an elder brother! Though you are older, and I look up with reverence to and honour you, I might have loved you as a wife, and have aided you with all a good man needs—his wife's loving admiration; but I am promised to another, and with the promise of my hand, I gave away my heart."

Here she stopped. It was inconceivably painful to her; for her perception, acute and vigorous as a woman's, and as delicate as that of the most honourable of men, told her that her gentleness and open frankness had been in fault. It was inconceivably painful to her to find that this man had been betrayed by herself into loving her. She almost hated herself, and felt that she owed him some apology.

The blow was a sudden and heavy one to Mr Horton. Few men, if any, make up their minds to propose without feeling a certainty of being accepted; and Mr Horton was one of those who, had he fancied any one would have forestalled him, would have repressed his affections with heroic force rather than have spoken. The answer Winifred gave took him completely by

surprise. He had been led away by the gossip of Mr R. Coaster and the *Morning Pillar*, or Barnett Slammers of the *Argus*, which had infiltrated society, and made the veracious body of people represent Miss Vaughan as a deserted maiden, whose prettiness had been an attraction indeed, but who had been quite thrown over by the young aristocrat whose name had been connected with hers. Society, when it talks of these affairs of the heart, always leaves out the feelings, and makes them affairs of Art!

No wonder, then, that, drawing himself up, Mr Horton apologised, and asked—

"And to whom, Miss Vaughan, are you affianced?"

"I will tell you," said Winifred, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and looking up to him with an innocent truth, that made him love her all the more. "I will tell you. I am to marry Lord Wimpole; but it is a secret."

"Lord Wimpole!" stammered Horton, with amazement. "But they said—at least it was asserted that"——

"It was that very idle talk that made Lord Wimpole, who is as delicate and honourable as yourself"——

Horton muttered a curse upon his rival. Good as he was, he loved too deeply not to hate the man who had deprived him of so much happiness; and would have turned away.

"You would love him," said Winifred, in a pleading tone, "almost as much as I do—not quite!—no one can ever do that; but when you know him, as you will"——

"Never, Winifred, never!" cried Horton, taking her hand, and wringing it in agony. "Don't ask me too much! Do not send me mad! I love you!—love you!—love you! That love will never cease, never diminish. You do not know my nature if you think it would."

"Dear friend!" said Winifred, coming closer to him—the little sly boots!—and putting up her forehead, with its rich dowry of flowing hair, to be kissed, "dear Mr Horton, how I thank you for that love!" Her eyes were full of tears as she looked up at him, and two big bright drops rolled down and fell upon the gauzy muslin that covered her neck. "I am full of pain that one so unworthy as I should have been the cause of your distress. And yet I am proud of the love of a good

wise man. Let us be friends; and let time, that heals the deepest wounds, turn your pure love into that of a brother. All will be well, I know; and when you come to know him"——

But here an impatient stamp of Mr Horton's foot betrayed his emotion. He took the pretty earnest young face between his hands, and kissing the forehead reverently, promised that he would always be her friend; and she, smiling through her tears, told him that, in her heart, if she could not give him all, he would ever be a dear friend, a nearer than a brother—and —and——

Here, happily, was heard Lady Sark's voice, who summoned the two to a game of whist. Whist is no doubt delightful to elderly gentlemen, but to a man who had just been rejected, it was torture; and to Winifred Vaughan, who watched him, it was little else.

But Mr Horton was game to the backbone. He played dummy without revoking, and went through the ordeal with as much bravery as if he were leading a forlorn hope. At last the time came when even the dowager began to nod. She had not noticed the constrained behaviour of the two; and, intent upon her tricks, had failed to observe one of the pitying loving looks which Winifred had showered in great plenty on the heroic barrister. *She*, at least, quite appreciated his goodness, and rewarded him in such a way that her looks poured, not oil, but vitriol upon his open wounds.

When he reached home, he was in a fever of excitement. He blamed himself for his folly, for his age, for not being a born lord, for a dozen other matters. He walked about his room like a caged lion. His forbearance during the game of cards had only intensified his feelings. He hated Lord Wimpole thoroughly. For this man was of a strong nature, and in the fresh agonies of the greatest sorrow and defeat he had ever felt. It was not in his nature to show his feelings. It would have been better for him if he had done so; but, finding himself the dupe of this reticence, he raged against himself.

"She will love me like a brother!" he said, bitterly; "and I will hate him like a brother!"

Then he sat down and tried to read; but the lines ran

before his eyes as the hedges run, or seem to run, by the side of one whirled onwards by a fast coach. He tried to pray, but it was useless. Then he thought of his old college plan of opening a book and finding a text, by a kind of *sortes*, to comfort him.

"I hate him!" he said to himself. "Has he not all the world to choose from, and does he not come between me and my love—my love—my love!"

As he repeated these words, he took up the Bible—his mother's gift—and opened it. His eyes fell upon the text: "Whoso hateth his brother is a *murderer*."

The words struck him with a thrill of horror. He hastily extinguished the light, as if to hide himself. Then he tried to pray. He clasped his hands above his forehead, and rose in agony.

"Spare me, oh, spare me, good Lord!" he cried. "This blow is too bitter!"

He stretched forth his hands in the darkness. His prayer was not answered, for his hand fell upon a pistol, one of a pair he carried with him on circuit. He felt the cold steel of the barrel like an electric shock. He grasped the weapon, cocked it, and cried—

"Ay, Lord Wimpole, with your wealth, your position, and your coronet, this shall make us equal. Blessings be upon it; this weapon levels all ranks! If I met you now, I would insult you, taunt you to some act of defiance, and shoot you like a dog!"

Then, throwing the pistol from him, he sank upon his knees, and cried like a child.

Within six months from that terrible trial, Mr George Horton, the most rising young barrister on his circuit, threw up the beginnings of a most promising practice, and accepted the post of a stipendiary police magistrate. Some said he was a fool, others said he was lazy, almost everybody put down to a mean motive this act. But he himself said—

"I have no motive to rise now. I will study crime, *for am I not a criminal myself?*"

CHAPTER XII.

MR FORSTER AND MR EDGAR WADE ENTER THE LAND OF DREAMS.

WHILE Mr Tom Forster, with his red bandana neatly wrapped about his head, was pursuing his profession in the land of dreams, Edgar Wade, carefully dressing himself, pulling on clean boots, washing his face, and arranging his hair, was preparing for a midnight visit. As he looked in the glass, the mirror reflected a handsome, very intellectual face, but with the traces of passion, hard work, and study by far too apparent on it. A good rough huckaback towel—the Turkish appliances not being yet introduced—produced a momentary irritation and colour ; and the young lawyer seemed apparently satisfied with his scrutiny. Locking up Old Forster's cheque, he took out four fifty pound notes from another drawer, and looking for an instant into the sick room, prepared himself for his journey.

Madame Wade was still in the same unconscious state. The night-light in the fireplace—a tall tallow rushlight, in a tin cylinder pierced with many holes—threw its chequered shade on the floor of the room, lighting the ceiling with a dim unearthly light, and falling upon the nodding head of a French Sister of Charity, who was half asleep when the door opened, but whose hands fell mechanically to counting her beads when she was aware of the presence of another. Mrs Wade was of the old faith—that of her country—and the Sister of Charity, a strange sight in any English sick-room, gave a foreign tone to the apartment, which the white hangings of the bed, and the Parisian, heavy, but scanty furniture carried out.

Edgar's lips moved mechanically, as he said—

"Any change, Sister Agatha ?"

"No, monsieur." (This was said in a pure French accent.) "If the good God would permit, madame would be better in the morning."

Sister Agatha devoutly crossed herself at the holy name.

"Good night. At six o'clock, then, I will look in again. My poor mother!"

Edgar seemed to ring the words from his heart, they were spoken so slowly and so softly.

He was away in an instant. Softly down the stone stairs, softly past the closed door of the dreaming old man, softly to the bolted door which led into the stables belonging to the house. Once in these, to light a lamp, dipping a phosphorous match in a little bottle for the purpose, and to saddle a stout and shapely cob, which whinnied as he approached it, was to Edgar Wade—who was quite used to that sort of work, and whose only luxury, to all appearance at least, was this horse, and rare and far between gallops in the park—but the work of a few moments. Putting on the bridle deftly, pulling tight the girths, and arranging the stirrups so that they should not click and ring, Edgar led his horse out of the stable into the mews, shut the door softly, and was soon far away with a stretching gallop to St John's Wood.

St John's Wood and Park Village East, London, have still a rural and secluded look, as if built for innocent and Paradisaic inhabitants who knew nothing of the trouble of this world, and who preferred the sweet simplicity of a semi-rural and suburban life to the bustle and noisy security of the towns. The houses are detached—very much detached, indeed—each, for the most part, standing within its own grounds, which are about a quarter of an acre to half an acre in extent. A ground floor and a first floor are all that they boast; and a cozy little hall in close, too close, proximity with the kitchen, leads to a drawing-room with folding doors on one side, and a pretty little dining-room on the other. Eccentric artists as the architects of these villages—happy villages—have been, they were not more eccentric than the owners who have baptized the houses. Whether they went through that solemn operation by throwing a paint brush at the pillars, and then dipping by hazard into the dictionary or "Court Guide" for names, is not known; but certain it is that Gloucester Lodges, Raby Villas, Sussex Houses, and Montmorency Places are to be there found. As Marvell says of King Charles I., when executed, "He nothing common did," so the builders gave no common

names to these pretty, secluded little villas, fit only for young brides in the very earliest and sweetest hours of the honey-moon. When baby makes his appearance, and the nurse and her companions march *in*—at which time wicked people always declare that the happiness of a married man marches *out*—then Raby Villa grows too small for its occupant. The humble Smith who inhabits it finds that he can hear too much and see too little of his wife; and he ends by taking a bigger house somewhat nearer town. Of late years, although the town has grown up to these rural retreats, and the noise of the morning omnibus is heard, as well as the shriek of the underground railway, where the blackbird whistled and the robin sang, these places have lost less of their rurality than any other part of London. The apple trees are grown somewhat older and bear less, the green is somewhat smokier, and the brides and babies have alike left the neighbourhoods for other habitations.

The hoofs of Edgar's horse soon ceased to ring on the granite road, and he trotted much more pleasantly over gravel and powdered flints for some quarter of an hour; when, up at the farthest end of a grove, that was then a grove, and trotting over a bridge of the very canal that at a distance ran by poor Madame Martin's deserted home, he stopped at a little house in its courtyard, and, opening the gate, led his horse in. The servant who took the horse and tethered him under an arbour, giving him some pieces of bread rather than corn, seemed to be quite familiar with the barrister.

"Your mistress is within?" was Edgar's question, put almost dogmatically, as if no chance in the world could permit her to be out.

"Oh yes, sir—has returned from the opera about half an hour."

So saying, the door was gently opened, and Edgar Wade ushered into the drawing-room. When there, the soft light of some wax candles and a French lamp fell upon him, the soft strain of a melodious voice, the delicious perfume of flowers, and even of wines, and the whole aroma of that atmosphere which surrounds one whom we love—love deeply, and with all the intensity of a strong nature.

As he stood looking at the beautiful creature from whom the song came, Edgar Wade stretched out his arms, more like a Frenchman than an Englishman, and cried—

"O Natalie! O my heart's love! how I do love you!"

Upon which, Mdlle. Natalie, of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, known as the Opera House, twirled round on her music stool, and said coolly—

"Est-ce-que vous avez fait tout le chemin à pied?"

"No! I rode—rode as fast as a good horse could carry me."

"Then why were you not here before, sir? You must not run two hares at the time. Do you love some one else, like your other rich *milords* English?"

"Natalie," said Edgar, "you know I love you and you alone. Come with me, my bird, to a softer clime. I will marry you to-morrow, Natalie, if you will accept me. You have only to say the word."

"Which I do not say," replied Natalie, adjusting her loose Indian wrapper, and sinking down on a luxurious couch covered with a tiger skin. "Where is my maid? She shall comb my hair while you talk. She knows not the English."

With a subtle knowledge of the young man who bent before her without any return for his love; with one or two mechanical little *moues* which she made at him instead of giving him kisses —this young Delilah threw herself upon the couch in beautiful and artistic positions, now revealing the beauty of an arm, now of her neck or hair, in a way at once theatrical and provoking, but which made the honest English heart of Edgar Wade dilate and throb with love. Oh! if he could but have seen how cold the little heart in that fair form was, how the brain calculated every word the mouth uttered, and how the "glorious abandon of the French artiste," as the enthusiastic reporters of the opera said, were but motions of a puppet, mechanically taught and as mechanically remembered! Oh! if he could but have seen this, he would have hated himself for his love.

When the maid came in, and prepared—also in an artistic way, for she was used to such scenes—to smooth the glossy black tresses of her mistress, Edgar, with the same respect for the little lady that he would have shown to a duchess, drew a

chair near, and taking one little hand in his own, said softly—

"And has my little bird grown tired of her nest?"

"England is very *triste*," said Mdlle. Natalie, with a sigh.

Indeed, she found it so, for Natalie Fifine had come from Paris, where she, by her united accomplishments, charmed that gay and volatile people. And she missed her little *réunions* of singers, dancers, actors, authors, and artistes, which she held on Sundays and high days and holidays, which were plentiful enough to people of her profession.

"We are indeed *tristes*," said Edgar. "We are a melancholy and sombre people. O Natalie, I would go anywhere with you, were I rich enough!"

"English *milords* are always rich," said the operatic artiste, with a hungry look towards him, "but not always generous or gracious. Now, our countrymen know our value."

A little hypocrite! Here was a young fellow who had thrown his fortune at her feet, who had furnished the little nest which held her whom he loved, "regardless of expense," as the upholsterer in Wigmore Street, who had fitted it up under his directions, well said. Gilding and mirrors, soft carpets, easy couches and chairs filled the house, and if the space had been larger, would have swallowed up a fortune. All that Edgar had, he had lavished on his love. He might as well have thrown his money into the sea. Always *exigeante* and *pretensieuse*, Natalie Fifine had marched into the country of her natural enemies, the English, with the virtuous determination of accepting everything and giving nothing.

"Did you bring me that bracelet, monsieur, which I admired? I want something handsome for my new part. I have nothing to adorn me."

"Except your beauty, Natalie."

"You cold English! You do not understand beauty, nor art, nor anything. The director of your opera gives me but very small parts. I have a trouble to distinguish myself."

"Your grace, your voice, my Natalie, distinguish you anywhere, if you were in the greatest court in the world."

"I should very much like to be an English *miladi*—a coun-

tess—they are accepted everywhere. Empty compliments do not please me."

"I am a poor man," said Edgar, "an *avocat*. I can only offer you my name and my heart. Yet"——

And the young fellow thought of the events of the last few days, and the splendid vista of ambition opened up to him. But he was wise enough not to tell this to Natalie. He was hungry for her love; and blinded as he was by his fondness, he yet waited quietly till he should win, as he hoped to win, her heart. In his romantic dream of love—that deep and fervent love which had made him stake his whole fortune, his whole being, on this quiet, selfish, mechanical little beauty—he had forecast a delicious reality of winning her wholly to him in his poverty and obscurity; and then, when fortune came, offering to her his greatness and his glory as a crown to her beauty.

Miss Natalie, looking up into his handsome face, thought that, like his cold countrymen, he was calculating the cost of that which might win her; and as she made a great deal of money by her art, and was able to absorb any amount of the precious metal, and spend it again upon her luxuries and her whims, she determined not to part with her precious self but at a very high price indeed. Mr Edgar Wade judged her by himself, and deemed her reticence virtue; she judged him by herself, and thought his silence calculation.

Thus, these two young people were as far from understanding each other as two young people well could be. Miss Natalie Fifine, had she known all, would have found that she had very nearly exhausted Edgar Wade's purse; while his love was boundless, noble, and virtuous. Had he known her and her antecedents, her cold heart—calculating, precise, unmoved—under that very artistically fond and voluptuous exterior, he would have rather married, as many a lawyer has married, his cook, maid, or the laundress of his chambers, than that graceful little creature whom he thought superior to any Englishwoman who ever lived.

"So monsieur has not bought Natalie that pretty bagatelle?"

She had a way, which was very pleasant to him, of speaking of herself as an innocent third person—quite a child, indeed—when making any demand upon his purse.

Poets may well say that love is blind. Mr Edgar Wade did not even dream of Natalie's venality, but stretched his arms again to her, and taking her pretty head in his hands, kissed her on the forehead. He was all purity, all devotion and respect to this little Bohemienne, who was more than astonished at this English way of making love.

"Natalie," he said, as if making her the confidant of something very surprising, "if I have *des bonnes fortunes*, I may become a *milord!*"

"Ah! yes," returned the young lady, whose education as to the English peerage was limited. Then she made a pretty little mouth, and closed her large liquid eyes. "Ah! y-a-a-s."

Luckily she said no more. As monsieur is an advocate, such was her reasoning, he may some day be Lord Mayor. Now, to be Lord Mayor was a very great thing in Natalie's eyes. The Lord Mayor was the embodiment to this Parisian of riches and dignity; but with all the supreme ignorance of a conceited, pretty, and spoilt Frenchwoman about anything else but *nous autres*, she knew that the dignity of Lord Mayor was too far off to be of much good to her. She therefore received this announcement very calmly.

"You will love me more *then*," said Edgar, mindful that, if he were acknowledged as the heir to the Earl of Chesterton, half the London matches—ay, and the pick of the country ones, too!—would be at his feet. "You would love me more then, my dove!" This with a slight bitterness—that is, the barrister was as bitter as he could be to one whom he loved so deeply.

"Ah, non!" said Natalie, for once noticing his tone, and speaking truly. For she would not have cared for the most magnificent *milord maire* that ever sat upon a civic throne, since she only cared for herself. Then, with a very artistic lapse into a stage-like utter softness and abandon, she put forward her little hands plaintively, and murmured, "Ah, we poor women, how little do you men understand our hearts! Mon Dieu! is it not for you to move onward and to undertake action, to be immersed in the love of wealth and of glory? That suffices you. But for us, it is to remain at home, to prey upon our desolate hearts, and to weep!"

And with very good French, charming inflection, and perfect emphasis she said this. Every word seemed an epigram. Her lover felt the reproof cut him like a knife, for the quotation was a happy one; and Natalie knew its effect well, having tried it at a little theatre near the Porte St Martin for over a hundred nights.

"O Natalie!" cried he, bending his head over the couch, and nestling in her arms. "O my soul's love! how noble, how generous you are! My future, my life itself is yours! Sleep, then, my bird, and await a happy future for us both!" and he pressed into her hand a packet of notes for current expenses.

"Peut être," lisped Natalie, as she touched his forehead with a kiss as light and as cold as the fall of a snow-flake.

The horse's hoofs were soon heard near Queen Anne Street; and anon Edgar Wade was asleep like the magistrate, dreaming of love; while Natalie, having counted her gains, slept too, in her little nest, in which she had previously indulged in a cigarette and a *petit verre* of absinthe. Poor little thing! She, too, was doing her best in the great game of life. She had endured hunger and cold in the streets of Paris; had sung at cabarets and *guingettes;* had been beaten by papa when he was drunk, and mamma when she was hungry and savage; had risen through her grace and her beauty; had established Père Bouvier as seller of old books and curiosities; and had rescued the mamma from the sad *role* of a rag-picker, to place her in comfort near the store of the old soldier, her father. To take these worthy people into the country in some desolate white French cottage, where they could quietly sink into the grave, consoled by the curé, and respected by *nos bon villageois*, was Natalie's ambition. Did not the end justify the means?

And oh! what cross purposes do we not play in love! Here was the great heart of Edgar Wade blindfolding itself with the idea that cunning reserve was purity—mechanical action the ideal of grace—the movements of a puppet the intense and rapturous bound of a living love. And while the Bouviers, *père* and *mère*, were watching their daughter, and counting every ounce of gold she gained, complaining that she had made no more, or talking of her cruelty, she was

watching their rheumy, hungry eyes with the only true love she ever gave to any human being. Ah! what a boon to our poor human hearts is true love! What misery is it to awaken from that sweet illusion, and find our idol worse than of clay, our soul's sweetest passion a delusion and a snare!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EDITOR OF THE "ARGUS" PICKS UP MATTER.

WHEN Mr Tom Forster had perfectly escaped from the land of dreams, which he did with various starts and tremors, as becomes a man well on in life, he awoke all of a sudden; and, acting mechanically, upon a vigorous impulse, jumped out of bed like one of those wooden frogs which itinerant vendors exhibit upon tea trays. It was this springy activity which gave Old Daylight his place in the world. He was always ready and on the alert; and this he attributed to the fact that, when awake, he was out of bed in an instant. Had he carried his philosophy further, he might have placed it to the iron will behind this activity.

The philosopher was copious in his ablutions—it being, let us add, somewhat of an error to suppose that the present generation first discovered the virtues of cold water and yellow soap.

After that, he was ready for breakfast and the battle of life.

The housekeeper—a boisterous, familiar woman—looked upon Mr Forster, who was always considerate and kind, as her natural prey. As she came into the parlour with the breakfast, she remarked—

"Well, we are looking well this morning, considering how late we were out last night; leastways, it was not to be called night. Small hours it was, and very small hours."

Mr Forster, who was busy with his own thoughts, looked up, and said nothing.

For her part, continued the housekeeper, she did not like

midnight wanderings. After they were a certain age, middle-aged gentlemen, not to say old men, were best a-bed.

The talkative Mrs Spiller had, in fact, heard the exodus of Edgar Wade; and, being utterly puzzled by her master, had charitably supposed him to be engaged in some nocturnal wickedness, too base to be made public. It was with a feeling very much akin to bitter disappointment that made her cry out, "Well, we do look well;" for, in Mrs Spiller's private opinion, Old Forster ought to have had the heavy eyes and weary look of a stage murderer after he had "done the deed." Mr Cooke, after being busily engaged on his own account in Duncan's chamber—and professionally in whitening his cheeks, reddening his eyelids, and dishevelling his stage wig—presented some such type, when he staggered in from the murder of the king, as Mr Tom Forster ought to have filled in Mrs Spiller's eyes.

Meanwhile, the dreamy philosopher was laying down a little plan of proceedings for the day's work, all of which he carefully carried out, and heard no more of Mrs Spiller's chatter than he did of the cry of milk and the rattle of the early carts in Queen Anne Street. As Mrs Spiller was too officious in laying the breakfast, and put down the mutton chop with a dash—Mr Forster always ate a hearty breakfast, and did not dawdle with his tea—her master rose with great politeness, and, opening the door, motioned her out, saying—

"Convey my compliments to Mr Wade, and ask him how his mother slept last night."

Mrs Wade was just the same, neither better nor worse, said Mrs Spiller—who knew all about it; and who, as is the case with cruel and selfish people, hardly believed in an illness which was so quiet, so uniform, and yet so dangerous. She also resented the interest that Mr Forster took in the family up-stairs, as opposed to her own.

"That will do, then; I shall not require you, and I shall not dine at home, Mrs Spiller;" and, with a hand held up to forbid further parley, he closed the door.

In pursuance of his plan, after breakfast, Old Daylight, taking one of the letters he had obtained from Edgar, proceeded to a gentleman who dealt in manuscripts and autographs in

Bond Street, and purchased, for a few shillings, one or two franks of the present Earl of Chesterton when he was Lord Wimpole and a member for Bedford. The old man started as he compared the MSS. There was no mistake. Edgar Wade was quite right.

From New Bond Street—then a very fashionable lounge, and ornamented with other Hessian boots than those of Old Forster—he struck across Covent Garden, newly built, and the wonder of the London world; as it is *now*, but from another cause. They wondered that it was so large and fine; we that it is so mean, dirty, shabby, and ill-appointed. But Old Daylight snuffed the fresh air, and saw the fruit and flowers with delight; and was amazed that, in a world so beautiful, such a being as he, with such a business as he had, could be needed.

In the centre avenue, Mr Forster, who intended to have reached Catherine Street, Strand—then, as now, known for its newspaper offices, but boasting (?) of a most objectionable private theatre—was stopped by the very person of whom he was in search—Mr Rolt, the editor of the far-famed *Argus* newspaper.

"Ah, ha! Mr Forster," said that worthy—who had long ago, of course, recovered from his black eye—"ah, ha! and so we meet you here on your way to Bow Street! Now, I suppose," said Mr Rolt, putting his thumbs in his white waistcoat armholes, and striking an attitude—for Mr Rolt was well known about his own quarter—"that you presume that I am about *my* business, picking up character. There 's plenty of it lost here! Ha! ha!"

"I suppose so," replied Mr Forster, dreamily; for although Rolt was the man he wanted, he was somewhat caught up—as one is when he reaches the top of a staircase, and makes a false step under the idea that there is yet another stair.

"You suppose so—you sly dog, you!" said Mr Rolt, in a bantering way, and thinking over a paragraph. "Now, you know, that if I have my business, you have yours. What is it that Hamlet says about business? You are a Shakespearian, Mr Forster—a Shakespearian. The passage runs thus:—

"'You, as your business and desire shall point you—
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is;' "——

spouted the literary man.

"'——And for my own poor part,
Look you, I will go pray,'"

continued Forster, with much better emphasis than Mr Rolt, who mouthed too much after the fashion of those days.

"Pray!—no, no, you won't," said Mr Rolt, falling into Old Daylight's trap. "Pray!—a deal of prayers you say!" continued the editor, with the flattering suggestion—and he intended it to be complimentary—that his friend never said a prayer in his life. "Now, look you, Mr Forster, I will spend a half-hour with you," looking at his watch. "Half-past ten. Yes, exactly at eleven I have an appointment with young Lord Sparerib and Dr Portly about—but there, you know, I 'm sure."

Old Daylight did not know, but he looked as if he did, which was about as good, since the appointment did not exist; only Mr Rolt knew that, to make his company gracious, he had better assume that his time was precious. As there was nothing better that Forster desired at that moment than half an hour's interview with the editor, the two, upon Forster's proposition, marched off to the then flourishing Hummums; and, sitting down, called for some German waters and a pint of Champagne, as a modest morning refreshment.

"You will be, of course, engaged in this curious affair out of town a little way? Really, Mr Forster, if it were not for men of your peculiar calibre, the public would not be protected. Mr Peel's bill was needed. Conservative as I am, I must confess that the government of the town needed looking to. Will these brooms, being new, have the usual effect of new brooms?"

"Well, they have made a clean sweep of the old officers," said Forster, with a reference to Brownjohn, "except one or two in the city and at Bow Street. I dare say they will do very well."

Mr Rolt here took the tall stone bottle of German water from the waiter, and gave him the Champagne to open, to pour in equal divisions into two tall glasses.

"Let us see," said he; "Lord Byron, in his last poem, says, 'hock and soda-water' is the thing. Well, it might have been so for him. His lordship was a poet; I am a plain prose man. He loved gin; I take very kindly to brandy. No, give me Seltzer and Champagne! Your health, sir."

Mr Rolt's draught was palatable, and he put himself more easily in his chair, as a *censor morum* and *arbiter elegantiarum* rolled into one.

"A common vulgar crime—for love, jealousy, or money—this is, I suppose, Mr Forster?"

"All crime is vulgar," returned the philosopher. "It is the worst possible way to get a thing, and nobody but a fool takes it."

"Egad, there are a great many fools, then," said Rolt, gaily.

He then opened his budget of wants, which Daylight well knew he would. Vulgar as the crime was, he thought that a good sensational leader upon it would serve the *Argus;* and he determined to pump Mr Forster as far as he could. But the well was exceedingly dry, or the sucker did not act; for it was astonishing how far a-field, without downright lying, Mr Forster led the editor of the *Argus.* He had a purpose to serve, too; and, after he had told or hinted at as much as he chose, he ceased from answering oracularly, and became a questioner.

"Your paper must have a large circulation, Mr Rolt?" said he.

"Im*mense*," said the editor, with great emphasis on the last syllable.

"Goes into a great many families of the nobility?"

"The tip-top, my dear sir, the very tip-top. Why, it was only the other day that the Duke of Cadcaster—you know him by reputation, quite a young man and a charming fellow; used to be the Marquis of Oldborough, courtesy title—well, the Duke said to me, 'Rolt, dash my wig, I do wonder how *you* fellows know all about *us* fellows.'—'Your Grace,' said I, with a smile, 'I'm not going to permit even you to peep behind the scenes. The British press is the palladium of British liberty.'—'She ought to be something,' said the Duke; 'she takes a confounded lot of liberties.'—'Perhaps so, your Grace,'

said I; 'but I cannot lift the skirt of her sacred robe. How we obtain news we *only* can tell. There are modes.'"

Old Forster's next question puzzled him.

"Do you know the Earl of Chesterton at all, or his family? I allude more particularly to his son."

Rolt buried his good-looking, frank face in the glass.

"I cannot say I do—*much*. I have never been to Chesterton House. The Earl is an old swell, and does not like the press. As to the son, I have exchanged words with him. I don't like him," said the ingenious and ingenuous editor, coming very near the truth. "When we exchanged words, they very nearly came to blows."

"What, is he so irascible, then?" asked Old Forster, making a mental note. "I heard that he was a fine young man at Oxford—one of the athletes, but as mild as a lamb."

"A very savage lamb, then," said the editor, who had not forgiven Lord Wimpole's striking appeal. "Why, he is a pupil of Jackson's—a regular bruiser—a patron of the ring—a lover of the noble art. He is up to all that sort of thing—quite a sporting nobleman.

"'A dunce at Horace, but a dab at taw.'

You know what the poet says, Mr Forster. Of course, such a man as that does not care about literary men. Let arms yield to the gown, say I. I won't give you the original; although, egad, it's quite the thing to quote Latin to the House—quite the tip-top thing, I assure you; but it must be a very familiar line, one that has done duty before, to please our legislators. You see, they recognise an old friend," said Rolt, with a grin.

"Just so," said Forster, quietly sticking to his point. "And so this young man is an athletic fellow, is he? What sort of man is he?"

"Oh, to do him justice, the dog's well built enough. About as tall as I am, and well made about the hips. Can ride well across country, I should think. A light-footed, nimble, quick fellow, from what I've seen." He might have added, "and felt," but he stopped. "You seem rather particular. Getting up a case, Mr Forster? You don't do the debt business—nothing in the way of the Fleet?"

Here he tapped Forster on the shoulder, as a bailiff might have done; and with his gloved right hand tossed over his other shoulder, pointed with his extended thumb towards Fleet Street.

"Making inquiries for a friend in that way," grunted Old Forster. "Has he expensive habits? Any vices? *Does he fence?*"

"Habits! Vices! Egad, Is hould like to know the man without 'em. Yes, plenty, I suppose—of a sort—of a gentlemanly sort, of course. But why do you put fencing among them?" Here the editor, opening his chest, threw himself into an attitude, and made a pass with his walking-stick. "If fencing is a vice, then poor Tom Lilburn Rolt is a monster. Ha! your tierce, carte—upper and lower—that's your game, Mr Forster!" And the literary gentleman, in his ecstasies, nearly knocked down one of the tall glasses. "Fence," he continued, coming up red in the face. "Well, yes, I suppose he *does;*—indeed, I know he does. I met Captain Chouser, who keeps a room down in the Haymarket thereaway, and is a celebrated master. Poor Chouser! He fought at Waterloo —married an heiress—spent all his and her money on fine company—sold out of the Dragoons—best fencer in Europe. Yes, I recollect he told me, when he thanked me for a brilliant little paragraph, that Wimpole was one of the best hands he had ever crossed foils with. Quick, dev'lish quick—like a flash of lightning—and with an iron wrist."

Mr Tom Forster hereupon rose, looking at his never-failing watch, and found that the half-hour had long passed. Then, to do the gentlemanly thing, he offered Mr Rolt a repetition of his morning draught, which was declined on the most friendly terms; and the editor insisting upon paying, he did no more than button up his spencer, and declare that he must be off.

"I shall keep my eye on you," thought the editor. "Sly dog—very sly dog. I believe that you've got more out of me than I have out of you; but I've taken notes, mental notes—begad I have; and you will find your name mentioned, Mr Forster, without any disparagement, in our next issue of the *Argus*."

Here, having reached the door of the Hummums, the editor

made a very polite bow; and swinging his tasselled cane' departed round the corner of Tavistock Court, bowing in a grand and condescending way to an old bootmaker, who exhibited at the corner shop some capital Wellingtons and Hessians, of a perfectly Bond Street shape.

"Humph!" said Old Forster, looking after him with interest. "He is a clever fellow, and does his work well; but he will have to spin a long story to make anything from what I have said. But they *are* clever fellows. I wonder that more of them don't take to my profession. It's more useful, and quite as respectable. But wait awhile."

Feigning to return for something, the old gentleman reentered the hotel, and, sitting down in the coffee-room, made notes of that which he had gathered from Mr Rolt. Then issuing from Covent Garden, he went forward at a double quick rate across Soho Square into Oxford Street, and made for Marylebone Lane.

Mr Boom was the sitting magistrate; but in the private room, tapping the oilcloth with his impatient feet, and clasping his hands, as he thought of his lost love, Mr George Horton was found.

"Well," he said, as Mr Forster entered, "have you any news of this culprit, or culprits?"

"I have. I am on the track. A word and a deed from you, and then I have the murderer of Madame Martin," said Old Daylight, trembling.

"And," cried the magistrate, rising and leaning forward, as one who was hunting some noxious animal, "who is this wretch?"

"We touch high game here," said Forster. "'Tis no one less than Lord Wimpole!"

The magistrate fell suddenly in his chair, and clasped his hands tightly, as in prayer. Had his rival fallen so suddenly, and so far? Had she whom he loved escaped this terrible, this deadly fate, of being united to a murderer? At this thought, his own love again sprang up, and urged him forward.

"Look here, Mr Forster," cried he, with an angry energy. "Look here! be sure you make no mistake! This is a matter of life and death! Great heavens!—can it be true?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MR HORTON SIGNS THE WARRANT.

THE magistrate had covered his face with his hands, and was breathing a mental prayer for guidance and support at this terrible juncture; while Old Daylight wiped his forehead with his red bandana, took his spectacles from his brow and rubbed the glasses, and systematically got together his notes. He could not understand Mr Horton's sudden emotion. His view of a magistrate was that, as a rule, he was an impartial, solid, stony-hearted lawyer, with as much blood and feeling in him as a *lignum vitæ* bowl which lies baking in the sun, or wet with the dew on the grass plot.

Moreover, this *lignum vitæ* bowl was to be utterly without bias—except a little, just in favour of the prisoner, so as to give him the benefit of the doubt. Such was English justice!

But, in contradistinction to the theory, here was the fact. Old Daylight himself was interested as much as his kind, good old heart could be in favour of anything that could advance Edgar Wade's interests. He had built up his theory, and did not wish to see *that* demolished. And, on the other hand, Mr Horton was biased in a way which he could not prevent against the accused; and although he strove against himself in every way, he could not help a predisposition to believe his rival guilty. He was a just man; but he could *not* be impartial.

The brave fellow took the next best step to being so. Finding that his prejudice set one way, he determined that his voice should set the other. Recovering himself, therefore, he looked with sadly fixed eyes, and somewhat sternly, upon the inductive philosopher, and said—

"I need not caution you, Mr Forster. Your experience is greater than mine; but it is my duty to recall to you the enormity of the charge, and"—this he said more painfully—"against whom it is preferred."

"What does that matter, sir?" asked Old Daylight. "Crime and death are two great levellers. They enter every man's house; the cottage of the mere hind, or the palace of the emperor."

The magistrate, who had been so sorely tempted himself, looked up at the old man, and wondered at him.

"I hope," he said, faintly, "I hope there are some amongst us free from so general a charge."

"Not one," said Daylight. "Every man, woman, or child is a possible criminal. In the cradle in the East, near to the happy Paradise their parents had lost, nestling on the soft skins, and playing with flowers, lay once two children, Cain and Abel. Who then could forecast the future, and foretell the murderer from the martyr?"

"Too true, too true," said Horton, too much occupied with his own thoughts to notice the elevated thought and language of Tom Forster—Mr Forster, it will be remembered, was a reader of Milton, and of good English literature. "But pray, think what you are doing. Lord Wimpole is a member of one of the first families of England. Think of the pain!"

"Sir!" cried the old detective, "first families of England! —what of that, whether the criminals be first or worst! If the poor beetle that you tread upon feels a pang as great as when a giant dies—beg pardon, Shakespeare again, sir!—do you think, as a magistrate and a man, that a poor and virtuous family feels the stain of crime less than my lord duke, or, for the matter of that, my Lord Mayor?"

The possibility of my Lord Mayor being brought up in custody of his own City Marshal, to be tried before his own Recorder, was so refreshing, that Forster came up smiling to the top of the argument, and said, with great joviality, "After that, I think I will proceed with the proofs, sir."

"You are quite right, quite right, Mr Forster," said George Horton, dreamily.

He saw he could do nothing else than listen to what Mr Forster said. But during the greater part of this exordium the magistrate was dreaming of the fair young face and innocent eyes of Winifred Vaughan, eyes too soon to be blinded with tears.

"Now," said Old Forster, taking out his note-book, "I shall want of you, sir, a search-warrant, two officers, and a warrant to arrest the person of —— Chesterton, Esq.—we can find out his Christian names from the peerage—commonly called Lord

Wimpole. I think they ought to abolish those sort of titles; don't you, sir?"

"We will not talk politics at present, Mr Forster. Will you just run over your proofs, for this is a very important proceeding?"

He said this coolly; but all the while he felt that Mr Forster was in the right.

"Well, then," returned Old Daylight, testily—for all things were so clear to him that he was in a hurry to arrive at his end—"well, then, I will give them you. I fancy, though, that the ancients were not such fools after all. They painted justice blind. She *is* blind; because she shuts her eyes upon plain proof, and will not see the criminal."

"Very possibly that is the case; but remember the maxim, 'better that ten guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should suffer.'"

"That's one of the stupid maxims I mean to demolish some day. But there, bless us, we shall never get on with this business. Now, sir, please attend. I proved pretty well to you, at Acacia Villa, that the murder was *not* perpetrated for money—that it was done for the possession or destruction of papers; one of which papers, being in ashes, yet revealed the words, '*my lord.*' That is *point one;* and a very strong point too, is it not? *Point two,*" continued Forster, pointing with a blunt finger to his note-book: "The murderer, I demonstrated, was young, very active—a man, of course—knew something about fencing and boxing, smoked cigars, and wore a moustache. All these points tally with the person I have named. He is a fencer, also a boxer, is very light and active, a pupil of Jackson the pugilist, and Captain Chouser the fencing master."

"You have ascertained all that, and upon good authority?"

"Upon the best, sir. Are not these two strong points?"

"Very," said the magistrate, coldly; "but they might be true of twenty young men of fashion, as well as of the one whom you wish to arrest."

"The man who did this deed wore fashionable boots. *Point three:* Here is a tracing."

Mr Forster took out a piece of silver paper, technically

termed flimsy, of a left foot boot, from Mr Hoby's, the bootmaker to his lordship.

"Here is the measure of the footmarks upon the little garden of Acacia Villa. They tally to the sixteenth part of an inch. What do you say to that?"

"Other men may have the same bootmaker, and he may employ the same last," said the inflexible magistrate. "All these proofs are fallible in the highest degree. The whole amount of them is merely circumstantial evidence."

"The best of evidence," retorted the old gentleman, stoutly. "I tried Latin once. Let me see—*circum*, around; and *stare*, to stand—eh? *circumstans*, standing around. Well, if you will *not* be convinced, I will put my circumstances so thickly that he will never be able to jump over them. *Point four:* On the very day before the murder, my lodger, Mr Edgar Wade, sought an interview with Lord Wimpole, and brought him these letters—at least, these amongst others. They are from Lord Chesterton himself to one who called herself Mrs Wade, and my young friend's mother. Now, as it happens, Lord Chesterton is the father both of Edgar Wade and Lord Wimpole. Moreover, the murdered woman was the nurse of the former, and a sole guardian of a secret of the highest importance *to him*—to my dear, good, noble boy—I beg pardon, to Mr Wade—and this perishes with her."

"Great heaven! what do you say? I am confused. I know not what to think. What—where—how have you learned all this?"

"That, Mr Horton, you will excuse me for saying, is *my* business. I have been at work—my process has *not* failed. Now to *point five.* Five points, each referring to and resting on each other; and, altogether, making about the strongest chain of evidence I ever met with. The young gentleman—I pray you, mark me"—Mr Tom Forster had studied Shakespeare and the Elizabethan writers so thoroughly that his language, when earnest, had a dramatic turn and grace—"I pray you, mark me," he repeated—for the magistrate had closed his eyes, and, with his hands grasping the arms of his chair, sat gazing, as it were, inwardly, just as some religionists do when they engage in mental prayer—"the young gentleman"—as this

was the point to be marked, Mr Tom Forster spoke very slowly—"the young gentleman was not at Chesterton House during the time when we presume that this desperate deed took place ; nor do any of his servants know where he was."

"Gracious Heaven ! sir," said Mr Horton, rising ; "the young gentleman might have been anywhere—with his friends, in the country. Why should his servants know of his whereabouts ? Why, if we were to spy and pry into your actions or mine, how should we stand the ordeal ?"

"Very well, sir, I hope," returned Forster, with dignity. "I do not spy nor pry into men's actions. But this I do : I follow a noble profession, which tracks out the murderer, and strikes down the villain. If a soldier is to be bestarred and called a hero, why may not one who holds his life at the mercy of every rascal who carries a pistol, and every footpad who can wield a bludgeon ?"

Had Old Daylight known the struggle going on in Mr Horton's mind, he would have spared him any reproof. As it was, he was sorry for his burst of dignity. Self-assertion is, after all, a poor thing ; and Mr Tom Forster, as he looked at the magistrate, who trembled and turned pale between many emotions, was sorry he had spoken. Horton himself saw no escape for the unhappy young man, and hesitated to put upon his track the bloodhounds of the law. In his wish not to be biased against him, he turned the balance the other way.

Forster was the first to speak.

"You do not see things as I do, sir. You are quite right. A judicial mind should be slow to believe in the guilt of any one ; but I have yet one point more to which I think you must yield."

"Pray pardon my hesitation, Mr Forster," said the magistrate, courteously. "I do not know, however, that it is a fault in an English magistrate to be on the side of mercy, and on that of the accused."

"But those five points taken together are very strong, sir."

"Yes ; but there is at present no motive, Mr Forster. If the woman Martin held certain secrets which were known to Lord Wimpole, why was she not disposed of—since that was the cruel end in view—a long time since ? Why not despatched

or got rid of in France or Italy? Why reserved to be murdered in a little English village so close to London that the whole place must ring of it; and, reaching to this huge city vulgar people call the metropolis, the story makes the whole country debate it as a nine days' wonder?"

"Crime," said the amateur thief-taker, "is not very wise. It fancies it is, but it is not. It puts its head in a hole, and thinks no one sees it. A criminal has always his foolish side in the midst of his double cunning. I'm blessed"—here Old Daylight permitted himself to use one of his colloquialisms—"I'm blessed if I don't think that a criminal is a fool on all sides."

"He is, he is," returned Mr Horton, thinking what a fool he had been, "unless he resists the temptation."

"Then he is a hero. By the way, amidst the many books you've read, sir, did you ever come across an old play—Ben Jonson's, I think—'The Devil is an Ass?' A good name, is it not?"

Mr Horton assented.

"And his servants," continued Old Daylight, with great sententiousness, "are double-refined, super-essential and extra-distilled asses. Here's a mess this young fool has got the noble family of Chesterton into! Who will get it out, except the *rightful heir?* Now, sir, please listen. You ask why this murder was done at this particular time—at half-past nine on Michaelmas Day—that was the time, sir. Why, because the day before, the 28th of September last, Lord Wimpole had a very serious discovery made to him, of which I will tell you."

Here Daylight sat down, and gave Mr Horton the leading particulars of Edgar Wade's story.

The magistrate had no longer any doubt. Piece by piece, following out the simile of the puzzle map, the inductive philosopher fitted together the evidence. Where time was wanted, time was had; where motive seemed to be weak, Mr Forster's links in the chain of evidence made it stronger; proof after proof was accumulated; and, at last, Daylight grew radiant and triumphant, like one who, for a long and close run, at fault almost at every field, at last sees the fox in a sixty-acre lot, and comes upon him with a full burst and a knowledge that he cannot escape.

"Upon my word," said Mr Horton, looking up with admiration, "you are a wonderful man! I quite beg pardon for and retract any slur I laid upon your work. It is as interesting as a chancery suit."

"And a great deal more ennobling," said Old Daylight. "And, though I say it, it requires *nous*, sir—plenty of *nous*. But then, in this case, which is a pretty one, I am very much indebted to chance. It will not do to let the public think that; but so it is, you know. Any laying bare the secrets of justice is hurtful to justice. That should move on silently, surely, and quickly."

"Indeed it should," said Horton, musing over what he had heard.

"Any weakness or misprision of justice is equally bad. It is better to be perfectly blind to a crime, than to try a man for an apparent villainy—of which the public sees at once, with its quick perception, that he is guilty—and to fail to bring it home. That, sir, hurts English justice! The dulness of the judges and jury, and the extra sharpness of the opposing counsel, harm it also. Once make punishment a toss up, and then, sir, you not only damage law and justice, but even Heaven itself. Now, sir, so far as I am concerned, you see how ready I am."

And surely enough, before the wondering eyes of Mr Horton, Old Daylight drew a chair to the table, and, producing a blank form, opened the blotting book, dipped a new and official goose-quill in ink, and proceeded to fill it up. Here is the form :—

Metropolitan Police District, to wit.

"*To all and every the Constables of the Metropolitan Police Force.*

"Whereas_____ of _____ hath this day been charged on oath before one of the undersigned, one of the Magistrates of the Police Courts of the Metropolis, sitting at the ——"

"Mary-le-bone, St Mary the Good!" said Old Daylight,

reflectively, as he filled up that part of the form. "Curious to join the name to a police court!"

"_____ in the county of _____ and within the Metropolitan Police District. For that h the said_____"

"Ah, it 's a *he* this time, and yet a *she* is at the bottom of it. One sex is as bad as the other. There 's no one of two there. We won't quarrel for the pre-eminence in vice as we do for that of virtue," sneered the old cynic. Then he went on with his writing, filling in the crime or indictable offence, going over every word of the printed matter, possibly with an idea of discovering any error made by the King's printers.

—"THESE ARE THEREFORE TO COMMAND YOU, and every one of you, the Constables of the Metropolitan Police Force, in his Majesty's name, forthwith to apprehend the said_____"

"What an aristocratic name he has got," said Old Daylight. "Why, it looks as well in a police warrant as a jewel on a dunghill."

—"And to bring him before Me, at the Police Court aforesaid, or before such other Magistrate of the said Police Court as may be there, to answer the same charge, and to be further dealt with according to law."

"Further dealt with!" sighed Mr Horton, as he prepared to sign the warrant.

"'Given,'" said Old Forster—still reading as Mr Horton wrote—"'under my hand and seal, this ——— day of October, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-nine, at the Police Court aforesaid'—*and may the Lord have mercy on his soul!*"

These words, pronounced very solemnly, were not in the warrant; but Old Forster had, by a jump, anticipated the concluding words of the judge to the condemned criminal at the bar.

Mr George Horton turned pale as he heard them.

CHAPTER XV.

"AND THESE DEAR THINGS SHALL BUT A MEMORY BE."

No sooner had Mr Tom Forster his warrant, with which Inspector Stevenson and one other constable—with our old acquaintance as searcher—were to arrest Lord Wimpole, than a sharp knock at the door made Mr Horton start like a guilty thing; so absorbed had he been in his conference with Old Daylight. Mr Forster had himself to cry out, in an authoritative voice, "Come in!"

It came in, carried by the messenger of the court. A man driving by in a fast gig—a bagman or travelling agent to some merchant, who much affected very fast horses and fast gigs with big wheels—had left it for George Horton, Esq. It was dated from Dover, and was from Mr Brownjohn, and to this effect:—

"YOUR HONOUR,—You may make yourself quite easy about the Acacia Villa crime. I am on the tracks of the murderer, and I have some of the spoons! The little boy was quite right. From all I can hear, he is some sort of a Dutchman. When I am a man's tracks, I never leaves him go.

"Make my compliments to the Inspector, and tell him that I says that he an' his old Amatoor may go a-hunting for a needle in a pottle of hay.

"I shall have the man, and produce him before your honour's self, or before some other worthy magistrate learned in the law. I 've got my eye on him now, but I generally prefers to let my fish play a bit.

"Your honour's hble. servt.

"To command,

"SAMUEL BROWNJOHN, St. P.C."

Mr Tom Forster's convictions were somewhat shaken up by this confident letter; but he never swerved. Drawing himself up, he said, with dignity—

"May I inquire what this person means by those initials after his name, 'St. P.C.' "

"I suppose," said the magistrate, wearily, "the poor man is

proud of his rank. He has lately been made a sergeant, and of course he is a police constable."

"Well, then," returned Daylight, "I hope that the foreign seaman will be able to obtain from the police constable sergeant a considerable compensation for false imprisonment. I 've no doubt the sergeant is enjoying himself by the seaside and will be better for his trip. I only hope that the foreign seaman has plenty of time on *his* hands, and will not mind being uselessly, vexatiously, and falsely brought up to London at his Majesty's expense. I hope, on his return, that Mr Brownjohn, with his prisoner, may find plenty of entertainment for man and beast—man," and he repeated, with a marked inflection on the last word, "man and *beast*."

And with this he departed to arrange matters with Stevenson, and left the magistrate to his reflections.

"I will spare him every dishonour, for her sake," said Mr George Horton to himself. "The busy, curious world, thirsting for news, and all agape for scandal, shall hear nothing of this till his guilt or his innocence is determined."

While the good magistrate is taking his measures in the matter, and Mr Tom Forster is quietly taking his, the story must run back a short space, to the third day after Mr Edgar Wade had made his important announcement to Lord Wimpole. That young nobleman had been greatly exercised by the announcement and discovery made by his half-brother. He recognised his father's handwriting; and the truth of the revelation of the barrister was gradually but surely borne in on him. As he listened to it, he was torn and divided by separate emotions. Had he consulted his own honourable feelings, he would at once have conceded Edgar Wade's right to his place and title; as it was, he only temporised with him, for the purpose of consulting his father.

Lord Chesterton was one of those parents who, in the minds of their children, inspire at once love and awe; but the former feeling bears very little comparison with the latter. His son looked upon him with a distant respect, in which love had certainly a share, but not a very large nor even a proportionate share. The Earl of Chesterton was of the world, worldly; but it was of the great world, not of the small, mean world—of

the old high school, not of the modern, mean, and little school. Even in his faults and vices he was manly and chivalric. His pride was too great for him ever to utter a mean and low thing; although almost all that he said was certainly selfish. He took part in the great world, and that part pleased him. He pretended to despise the world; and yet, in his heart of hearts, he bowed down to it. He would never act against it. He did what that did, but he did it all *en grand seigneur*. He was, at the time of Mr Wade's curious revelation, spending his leisure time at Brighton, a fashionable watering-place, frequented by some of the remnants of the old beaux of the regency, who walked upon its cliffs, and trotted over its breezy downs, and regretted the brilliant days that were past. The fast Brighton coaches—one of them driven by a baronet, Sir George Vincent—were looked upon as innovations by gentlemen and noblemen who posted down in their own chariots, and who did not condescend to rub shoulders with even the genteel population which flocked at certain seasons from London to the seaside.

A letter from Lord Wimpole, which he would hardly have dared to have sent had he not known that his father was ready to quit this pretty and yet rural watering-place, determined the Earl to post to town some two or three days earlier than he would have done. He wrote by return—for he was a precisian in his politeness—a very affectionate note, in which he begged his son to meet him at Hyde Park Corner, whence they could send on the post-chaise to Chesterton House, and the Earl could have an opportunity of stretching his legs by a gentle walk home.

On the evening of the day, therefore, before that on which Mr Forster had obtained his legal document, the chaise duly rattled up to Apsley House, and the Earl descended and met his son.

Lord Chesterton was not a man to show his emotions, but he was astonished and hurt at the changed appearance of Lord Wimpole. Dark rings surrounded those bright, honest eyes, which used to beam with a pleased loyalty on the father. The eyes themselves were heavy and cast down, as if the owner meditated upon some hidden grief and shame. The step had

lost its elasticity, and the very carriage of the figure had become slouching and weary. The voice was no longer ringing and cheery, but muffled and sad. All this change the Earl noted in a few moments; but if he felt it, he made no comment upon it. *That* was his pride. The son—for he knew that he was still the Earl's son—felt this silence as somewhat of a blow; when, had he known his father better, he would have rejoiced in the tender delicacy of the old nobleman.

After a respectful greeting—more than ever respectful and tender, but with a mournful manner which he could not subdue—the son offered his arm to his father as a support. It used to be one of the sights of Bond Street, of which Lord Chesterton was much more proud than he ever confessed, to see those two gentlemen, the elder and the younger, walking arm-in-arm, and receiving the acknowledgments of their friends, and the bows of the passing tradesmen, which my lord acknowledged as readily, and with even greater courtesy than he did the greetings of his equals. Perhaps there is not a nobler sight than to see a sire thus supported by his son; both of them men, one in the vigour of youth, the other possessing all that makes the early autumn of life admirable and respectable. "As a man grows old," said a lady of great observation, "he grows, if he leads a happy and a good life, more handsome, and much more worthy to be looked at." Lord Chesterton had mellowed into an easy dignity, and was unmistakably an English gentleman; and good-looking as was Lord Wimpole —well built, fit in face and figure to compare with most people —there were few who did not think the Earl the handsomer gentleman.

But now it was very different; tanned with the sea breezes, upright as a dart, the elder of the two seemed to tower above the other.

When, therefore, Lord Wimpole offered his arm with a certain timidity and shame, instead of that conscious pride with which formerly he lent his support to the light touch of his father's hand, the earl said, almost with pity—

"No, Philip, no, my poor boy; you are not well, and I am as strong as a rock. You had better lean on me."

The arm of the son fell within that of the father, and trembled and shook with emotion as it rested on its support.

"My dear boy—my dear Philip!" said the Earl, as they passed from the high road to the quiet streets which led to Chesterton House, "your letter has quite puzzled me. What can be the matter? They play high at Arthur's, I know; but you have a very large sum of money of your own, and surely that cannot"——

"Oh, pray sir, spare me! I never gamble; and the little money I might lose at cards would never trouble me. No, it is something weightier than that." Then, after a pause, he added, "So weighty that I cannot"—here he paused again—"I cannot speak to you about it until after dinner. That, perhaps, will give me strength."

"I am convinced, Philip, of your honour and integrity. I am convinced that you would never do anything that might hurt me or our family."

"Thank you, sir, for those kind words," said poor Philip; and his hand trembled as he said it.

"I am also convinced," continued the father, "that young men see things in a very different, often in a more serious, light than we do. Therefore, I only tell you this—don't look too seriously upon anything. Nothing can hurt us. We stand, *nous autres*, too high for the *canaille* yet, with all their whispers and their slanders in print, to cause any serious pain or trouble between us. But, as you wisely said, we will dismiss the subject. You are quite right to discuss anything which promises to be troublesome after dinner."

The Earl had the fact somehow borne in upon him that Philip was troubled with some love affair, and possibly with another *esclandre* in that palladium of British liberty, the *Argus*. He, therefore, without directly referring to the matter, talked about the press of the day, which, to say the truth, was not very distinguished for its insight or for its integrity. He blamed the public writers in the most severe way, and talked as if the presence of an author in a family was a stain hardly to be survived.

"There 's Lord Culdesac," he said, "is a poet, and has been to the Holy Land—which, to be sure, is a great undertaking,

and renders his lordship eligible for the Travellers' Club; but what need has he to sell his book to Mr Centley, and have it produced and read at all the circulating libraries at Brighton, Bath, and Cheltenham? I heard some people actually talking about securing early mail copies, as they used to do when the Waverley Novels came out. Dear me! how a man of family can consent to be so talked about I cannot conceive."

The highly born old Philistine arrived at his aristocratic gates by this time, carefully shut up in the heart of London, and as jealously guarded as if Lord Chesterton had been a Grand Turk. In the wide gardens of Chesterton House rabbits might have burrowed, and deer been comfortably housed in clumps of overshadowing fern. Nobody ever walked in those solitary gardens except the men who periodically repaired and kept them in order, and the suburban sparrow which fled from his town house in Burlington Gardens to this semi-rural retreat in Mayfair with the utmost delight. These sparrows had evidently a great deal to say about various matters, for they were holding a parliament almost as noisy as that which used to sit on College Green in the days when Ireland was not down-trodden by the base, bloody, and brutal Saxon.

As the Earl and his son approached, the outer gates of Chesterton House flew open as if by magic, and the obsequious porter greeted both his masters with a low bow. The Earl asked him how he was, with the interest one takes in an old servant; and the very inquiry seemed to do the man good. Then Lord Chesterton continued his tirade against the press and authors in general.

"There was old Mrs Magnify," he said; "bless me, how that old woman did rave about Shakespeare! What did she know about Shakespeare? Why, her brain was not bigger than a bird's. And the lies the poor old creature told were enormous. No, my boy, you need not fear anything those fellows can say; and your best answer to them is silence. Of all things I most dread, I think it is a paper war. You do not get hurt by it; but you lose caste so much by dipping your fingers in ink. In America, now, I am told"——

Lord Wimpole started suddenly. His father's pleasant voice and even talk had fallen upon the dull, drowsy ear of a man

sick of life and sick at heart. And, curiously, as his father said the words "in America," *his* thoughts had formed the very words coincidentally; so that it seemed as if a far-off voice had counselled him to flee, and to hide his shame in that distant land.

"Why did you start and tremble so?" asked Lord Chesterton. "Philip, you must, indeed, be very ill."

"It was nothing—a fancy," said Philip, nervously; and his father was wisely silent. They approached the house. The doors were again opened, and the ranged servants welcomed their master, headed by the steward.

"Ah, Mr Roskell," said the Earl to him, "how do you do? Quite well, I see. You have nothing to say, I hope?"

"Nothing," said the faithful steward, to whom the Earl's manner was always deferential and courteous. "All is as usual, your lordship."

"Come here, Roskell," said the Earl, treating him like an old friend, and not as a servant. "You may attend me upstairs, I think."

He leaned upon the man's arm as he ascended, a little in advance of his son, who, upon reaching the first floor, branched off towards his own room.

"Now," said the Earl, looking after the young man, "there's something the matter there, Roskell. What is it? Wimpole's not right—not at all right."

"Not that I know of, your lordship," said Roskell, looking back; then to himself, "As right as a trivet. We are very lucky, very lucky to have such a young nobleman.' There's nothing the matter with *him*. Why, just look at Lord Quandary's two sons—both married—dash'd if they aint no better than they should be."

"Tut, tut, Roskell! You shouldn't talk of Lord Quandary. He's quite a different sort of fish."

Here they reached his lordship's room, talking as familiarly as friends. They had been boys together—Lord Chesterton being some few years older—and Mr Roskell had risen from post to post, until he was the steward of the Earl, and his second self. He was not only honest, but thoroughly capable; and had a head for figures which was the pride and wonder-

ment of Chesterton House. He knew the cost of everything, from the new ornamental trees in the plateau of the old castle in Warwickshire to the blocks of salt in the kitchen in London. He was making his own fortune quietly; but was saving more than a fortune—such as would content his modest desire—for his master.

"He has been so valuable and so long with me," said his lordship, "that he is my master. I do what he tells me. He is no longer my servant, but my friend."

Mr Roskell took his lordship's room, therefore, under his care, and with a look sent away the valet, who had laid out the Earl's dress suit and a change of clothes in the nicest order.

"So you think that Philip's all right, eh?" asked the father.

"Don't say that he is," returned the steward. "I know precious well that he was. He showed me a new foil, three or four days ago, and made a lunge at me in his fun, and broke the blade. 'Twas a mercy it didn't go through me. But it was worth the scare to see his lordship's fondness and attention. He turned as pale as a ghost; and then the bright colour came back again, and he wrung my hand with gladness, so heartily that he nearly brought the blood out of my finger-nails. 'I am so glad I did not hurt you, Mr Roskell,' he said."

"I am glad, too," said his lordship, graciously, as he took his waistcoat.

He was dressing with great care, and he looked so well and so noble, that the steward's honest eye looked pleased as it rested on his master.

"Well, and what then?" said the Earl.

"Oh, nothing! only always full of his fun, and yet as true a gentleman as ever stepped. He says to me, 'Mr Roskell,' he says, 'just do me the favour to feel my biceps'—that's what he called it—and he raised up the muscle of his arm till it set up like a tea-cup. 'Lord!' says I, 'your lordship has been practising.' 'Mr Roskell,' says he, I'm going to have the gloves on with the Knightsbridge Lurcher, and I mean to send him flying.' And he would, too, that he would."

"Ah!" said his father, with a sigh, taking his white hand-

kerchief and tying it carefully round his neck. "Ah! he didn't talk like that to me!"

"Of course he wouldn't, through fear, your lordship; on'y he knows what an old friend I am. And such a man, or a better man, a better heir to a nobler father or estate, we haven't got in all England. What oats he had to sow were not *wild*."

"And yet," sighed the Earl; "and yet—by the way, let us have some of that very fine Chambertin—he does not drink as we use to do. And yet I feel as if something was going to happen."

"What can?" asked Roskell.

"Ah! what can?" asked the unhappy Lord Wimpole, as ready dressed, pale as the white waistcoat he wore—then *en règle*—he paced the room.

Somehow, the order, love, respect, the riches, the luxury around him seemed inexpressibly dear.

"And shall I leave all these, all these for ever—and for ever?"

A murmur seemed to echo through the silent halls—*for ever!*

CHAPTER XVI.

"For all our good we hold of Heaven by lease,
With many forfeits and conditions bound."

PHILIP STANFIELD felt, during the dinner he sat down to, stranger emotions than he had ever felt in his life. Mr Roskell, upon whom everything in Chesterton House depended, had provided one of those exquisitely-arranged repasts of which Brillat Savarin speaks, when he says that, "after having commenced to eat, it is only a philosopher who dares to leave off." The *chef* at Chesterton House was a great personage, whose genius rose upon the occasion; and who, sympathising with his master in his simple but elegant taste, never worked better than when he knew his own two chiefs would eat of his dishes.

"To cook for a crowd, look you, Monsieur Rascall," he would say, "is, in effect, not the glory I seek. The ambition of your Milton, to whose great name you have wisely assigned your best oyster—why is the name of Shak-es-peirr not yet appropriated to some great dish? oh, you dull islanders!—your Milton, I say, wished that his dishes should be pronounced upon by 'fit audience, though few.' I was told so by a man on your *Times*—a Dr Robertson—who loved a good dish. I agree with Milton."

As the *chef* had also the best market in the world to draw from, and was really a cook of great talent, no wonder that the Earl and his son both frequently conveyed the fact, in a courtly way, to Mr Roskell, that they ate such dishes nowhere but in their own house; and that, in fact, there was a thorough understanding between the *chef*, the steward, his lordship, and all concerned, that, when anything was wanted which could stir an appetite under the ribs of death, M. Le Noir was the person to provide it.

The soups were two—clear turtle, followed by green pea; a turbot and lobster sauce, served in a picturesque way; *entrées* of oysters cooked in three different ways; a delicate saddle of mutton, which M. Le Noir rightly proclaimed as equal to venison; a salmi of partridges; and a single but magnificent roast cock pheasant, cooked with chemical perfection, served like a picture, in the glory of his tail feathers, and displaying, like Nelson with all his orders, the magnificent proportions of his breast to the enemy, completed the dishes. The dessert was an English pine and one fine bunch of English hot-house grapes; and with it some coffee-ice, then a novelty.

Philip, in spite of his deep depression, and to his own great wonder, fed like a hungry man feeds; but ate as if he were in a dream. To him it seemed so. The wonderful quietude and order of the place; the Earl, like some representative nobleman doing the honours gracefully; Mr Roskell, a little behind his chair, approaching only with the wines—or rather wine, for throughout they drank but one—and quietly beckoning with finger, or merely raised eyelid, to the under-butler and a servant out of livery, who were in attendance.

There was, moreover, a little quiet conversation going on

between the Earl and Mr Roskell, which added to the dreamy unreality of the last grand feast that Philip was to enjoy in Chesterton House. The Earl would turn round to his old servant, and say—

"Le Noir has excelled himself. That salmi was delicious."

"He knew your lordships would dine by yourselves, and then he always puts on a spurt."

"Uncommonly fine turbot, Roskell."

"Well, since your lordship says so, it 's the finest of the size I 've seen; and Mr Groves says no less. Ay, and he is a judge of fish, the old gentleman."

"A capital tradesman," said the Earl. "A very worthy man. Let me see, how is his gout?"

"Well, he would go to the Leger, your lordship, and that made it worse. But for all that, he would hop out of his shop to pick out a fish for you. 'Tell the Earl that turbot 's worth eighteenpence a mouthful,' said he."

"Egad, he 's right. I will look at him as I pass: it will do him good. Mutton comes from Wimpole, I suppose?"

"No, from the farm at Banstead. Six years old. A present from the tenant."

"Send him some venison. He 'll lose by the exchange; but they think so much of a little attention."

Such bald, disjointed chat—for it is impossible, in print, to convey Mr Roskell's deferential whispers, or the courteous, friendly, homely tone and manner of Lord Chesterton—hardly broke in upon the thoughts of Philip more than the distant murmur of the sea. There is something very soothing in a well-bred tone; just as there is something very irritating in the strident, harsh chatter of the roughs of society.

Striking upon his ears like conversation from the shores of Acheron, there came questions from his father about such and such a tenant, and kindly answers from the steward to such questions. Philip seemed to himself to have lost all interest in these good people. He was not of them *now;* and the kind garrulity of old Roskell and the Earl no more concerned him then did the history of twenty years back.

His father, who noticed his silence, and was himself, therefore, the more talkative, comforted himself with a meaning

look at the steward to note the young fellow's appetite. At length, the coffee-ices were brought in; and Mr Roskell and his aids, with careful and searching glances at the table, to see that not a spoon strayed beyond its appointed place, withdrew.

The good old fashion of drinking toasts was not then done away with; and the Earl, filling his son's glass with Chambertin, nodded to him and said—

"We will have just one toast, Philip—'Our house, may it flourish as long as the land!'"

This was a polite way of drinking his son's health, and Philip felt it to be so; but he only lifted his wine, saying—"Your lordship's toast;" and, tasting it merely, put it down.

"Well," said his father, "that ought to have had a bumper at least; but you young fellows are gradually losing the habit of drinking. I suppose, in a generation or two, toasts will be banished, and generous wine pronounced a delusion and a snare."

To comfort himself under such a dreadful future, Lord Chesterton filled his glass, and drank solemnly and to himself.

"Now," said he, "now, Philip, my boy, is the time for that discussion we promised ourselves. I hope what we have to debate is nothing serious."

Philip started, as from a reverie.

"So serious, my lord," he said, "that we cannot discuss it here."

"Why not?"

"There are doors," said the young man, pale and frightened. "Your servants perhaps might hear."

And he led the way to his own room, holding above his head a lighted taper, and looking forward as if he were afraid of some danger.

A fire was burning in the grate, and wax candles stood ready to be lighted; but Philip lighted them not.

The Earl, impressed by his manner, said nothing; but submitted passively, and sat down in the chair Philip placed for him as if he had been a child.

"You don't seem inclined," said Lord Chesterton, with a feeble attempt at an after-dinner joke, "to allow much light to be thrown upon our discussion, Philip."

"It is best," answered his son, "that this should be told in the darkness."

Then he, standing with his back to the light, and before his father, so that the Earl could not see his face, spoke, as it were, out of the darkness, and in agony cried—

"My lord, the Earl of Chesterton, *am I your son?*"

The tone, the cry almost, smote the Earl in the very joints of his armour; but he answered boldly and quickly—

"Before God you are, Philip, my dear and honoured son."

"There is yet another question," returned Philip. "Would that you could answer it so well! Am I your lordship's legitimate son, heir to your name and estates?"

The answer came not forth so readily now. The Earl saw that, at a moment, the fabric he had endeavoured to build up for thirty years had crumbled to the ground. Henceforward, if kept at all, his secret must be kept by the connivance of his son Philip; who, although the chief person concerned in the matter, was by far too upright, in his father's opinion, to allow interest to influence him in a matter of honour.

And it is to be noted that Lord Chesterton had not only implanted this honourable feeling, but delighted in it.

"Bless the boy," he said to himself many a time, "he has the true chivalry of his race. He would not do a base action to save his life."

It had been the Earl's aim through life to keep the guilt of the transaction entirely to himself, and the knowledge of it also, so far as it could be kept. He had so well succeeded that, after the death of the valet Gustave, he had dismissed from his mind the bare possibility of the history, which the reader is already aware of, ever coming to his son's knowledge. The question put to him by his son came upon him like a thunderclap. Some time elapsed before he could recover himself.

"Shall I repeat the question, my lord?" asked Philip's voice out of the darkness.

"Unless you would break my heart, no! I will swear, Philip, that"——

"Oh, spare your oaths, my lord. This but confirms me. That you would have me to be your heir and son, I know too well."

"What villain, Philip," said the Earl, rising and mastering his emotion as well as he could, "has dared to sow any such doubts in your mind?"

"No villain, but a noble man," returned his son, with a sneer that was hardly perceptible. "What do you say, my lord, to its being no less a person than Philip Stanfield, commonly called Lord Wimpole, himself?"

"If, Philip, you have made some pretended discovery yourself," returned his father—a faint glimmer of hope coming into his mind that all might not be so bad after all—"you have only to tell me, and I will set all right."

"No doubt, my lord, you would. But the time I have had to reflect upon this has been sufficient to convince me that your efforts would be in vain. You seem to forget that the person now speaking to you has some right to doubt his own identity. He is not in reality Lord Wimpole, *but Edgar Wade!*"

With a start, and a bound, and an oath, the Earl sprang to his feet. The mine had been sprung; and the carefully raised fabric, which had shown so fair a front for thirty years, had been blown to atoms. Had the battle been fought with regular approaches, the Earl would have still held out. As it was, his army had disappeared, his defences were nowhere. He had nothing to do but to capitulate. He made one more effort.

"O my son! my son!" he cried, "what madness possesses you? Speak no more to me—tell me no more. Let us blot out this fearful night. I will not listen. I forbid"——

"It is too late, my lord," said his son, "when I demand." Then, taking his father's hand, he said, "Listen till I tell all. *Sit down.*"

A sad shrift it was. Burnt in upon the young man's brain were the letters which Edgar Wade had shown him. Without any effort, he repeated, word for word, the story of the wrongs of the Countess, whose portrait hung above them. The boy had been very fond of his mother—*his* mother, as he said, with amazing bitterness—that quiet, subdued, selfish, and most proper lady, who was never put out, and who might have had as much, but certainly not more, external feeling than a

mummy, or than one of the waxwork figures in the novel exhibition by Madame Tussaud, the ingenious old lady who had set up her tabernacle in the fashionable quarter of Baker Street. The wrongs of the Countess, Philip dwelt upon much more eagerly than his own; and here, indeed, Lord Chesterton seemed to glean some faint hope of comfort.

"Speak no more of her," he said. "She knows all now, and is beyond our mortal feeling. At any rate, Philip, cruel as I have been in my misguided policy, I have only done to you that which I thought at least was kind and good."

"Oh, my lord," returned Philip, "how foolish and short-sighted we are! You tell me that you tried to benefit me, and to do good. What good can now remain to me? I seem even to have lost myself; and hardly, indeed, my identity remains. Seneca makes his heroine, when all melts from her, comfort herself with the proud saying, 'Medea superest;' but what is there that is mine! I am not even what I thought I was."

Chesterton had bent down his proud head, and the tears which were now silently running through his thin fingers showed how much he felt his son's grief.

"Come, come," he said, rising and placing his hand on his son's shoulder, "all is surely not lost. If we concede that this barrister makes good what he avows, which I by no means say that he will," continued the Earl, "*splendide mendax;*—which, mind you, I can promise."

"Oh, my lord, you have others to convince besides that gentleman who was lately called Edgar Wade. The enemy you have to conquer is not on the outposts, but in the city itself. You have to convince *ourselves. We* cannot act as if truth were untruth."

These sentences brought Lord Chesterton down on his chair again.

"O Philip! O my son!" he sobbed, "you indeed teach me how I ought to have felt! What remains for you, my boy? You asked me that just now. My deeper, holier love—your own education, knowledge, and goodness—your unbroken honour, your uncontaminated faith"——

"Alas—alas!" sobbed the young man—for the father had

broken down as he spoke, and could not finish his sentence—"alas! my father, your very kindness has proved poison to me. The education you have given me has made me appreciate the luxuries with which I was surrounded, and it has added another and more bitter sting to the sorrow with which I part from them. I seemed not proud; but I loved, with a deeper pride because it was concealed, the marks of riches, of place, of power, around me. I loved the decent order of your house, your well-tutored servants, and the respectful, even tender, deference they showed me. I *was* the heir of all your inherited honours, of the goodness of the Countess, of the ancient lineage and noble blood of my father. And all this time I was an unconscious impostor—a cuckoo in the nest of the hedge-sparrow; no true man, no real son of yours, but a"——

"Stop, Philip!" said the Earl. "Press not upon me so hardly for my sin. In spite of all you may say, listen to what I say. I will not neglect nor leave you. You are this day ten times my son."

He put his arms round the younger man, as if to shield him from any harm. His words and action touched the heart of Philip, who, taking his father's hands in his, kissed them tenderly, and then put them away.

"No, my lord," he said, "you can do nothing."

"I will go with you to America. We can live together, Philip."

"Too late! This is too late, my lord. You cannot take property which belongs to him. You are, no doubt, very strong and powerful as Earl of Chesterton; but there is something infinitely stronger—the laws of England. What they pronounce, that we must abide by; and their voice must be on the side upon which both our consciences are ranged. Every benefit that you have heaped upon me has been but a trial. The tender education makes me feel more deeply my position; the love of power and position you have inculcated has made me cling more deeply than you can think to the false position I innocently found myself in. Oh, my lord! you have tried me too much. There are crimes which angels seem to lead to—crimes made venial by the temptation; and temptations too strong to put fairly before weak human nature.

How do you know but, as the result of your crime, my brain has not been taxed to save my seat—that my hands have not been dyed in human blood?"

The Earl trembled as these words fell upon his ear.

"Philip!" he cried, "I can bear no more. Let me go at once. Let me sleep over the events of this day. To-morrow we may meet with and temporise with this young man. Good night! good night!"

The Earl hastily unfastened the door, and hurried across the corridor; and Philip watched his retreating form.

"Good night, my father," he murmured; "good night. To-morrow we may temporise! Alas! what new difficulties may not to-morrow bring forth?"

CHAPTER XVII.

SAMUEL BROWNJOHN'S QUEST AND GUEST.

CÉSAR NEGRETTI stood in a rather desponding attitude in the front *salon* of the Hôtel des Etrangères, in Rupert Street, Soho. And, to say the truth, the Strangers' Hotel, though it was frequented, according to its prospectus, by gentlemen of every rank, from the diplomatist to the crowned head, who came to worm secrets out of the mysterious man, did not look very inviting—at least, not to a British eye.

There were no comfortable boxes and snowy white cloths, no steaming potatoes and smoking chops in the *salon* of this hotel; but merely four round tables, painted, and very cheaply painted too, in imitation of marble. A cruet-stand, with some dark mustard, some pepper and salt mixed, and a little vase of oil adorned each table; and on each table, also, was a dirty *carte*, which had upon its face the price of various dishes, and upon its back a list of wines. Common Burgundy and Vin de Grave, a thin white wine, seemed to be all in the cellar; while the *pièces de résistance* were haricot, bouilly, and fried potatoes, with an omelette, sweet, or with chopped herbs. Biftek was to be had, but it was curiously unlike the dish in England or France; and the small slices of mutton served up always

puzzled the stranger with their feeble struggle to remain as far from being like a mutton chop as they were a French cutlet. To tell the truth, the Haymarket and Soho Square not being in so advanced a state of civilisation as they are at present, the Strangers' Hotel saw kings and diplomatists very seldom; and had fallen into being a mere house of call for gentlemen's servants, valets, couriers, and the lower rank of hangers-on of great families. Hence, César Negretti, who stood between the four tables, lightly attired as garçon, in neat black jean jacket and white apron, might well yawn.

He was as handsome, this man, as the Greek faun; and had as merry and as wicked a grin upon his countenance when he laughed, which he did when, by a cautious and clever flap of his napkin, he killed two or three flies which, all of a row, were the only guests who were feasting at the hotel. Every attitude he fell into had grace and elegance in it. His waiter's jacket seemed to be the fitting uniform of a king. His apron, tied lightly round his waist, seemed to have been put there out of coxcombry, so well it looked; and his old waiter's pumps fitted as if they had been elegantly made for the most supreme dandy of Bond Street.

César's face was a puzzle. He looked any age between fifteen and fifty. He was one moment a radiant, joyous youth —and certainly he was young; another, he fell to pieces, and became old. Just now, he looked miserably thin and worn; but as he was wonderfully successful in killing flies, he brightened up a bit, and said—

"*Peste!* this won't do for me. This hotel will yield nothing. I shall go back to Malta, whence my patron drew me."

Here he cleverly sprinkled a little pepper and salt upon the nose and into the eyes of a kitten that was playing at his feet, and burst into a most radiant smile as he watched the agony of the little creature, and listened to its sneezes. Happily, with kittens, as with all young things, pain and troubles soon pass. The kitten licked its nose, and washed out its eyes, in some wonderful way, with the ball of its foot. Its tail grew smaller, its sputterings less; and César's smile died down.

But, melancholy or merry, this handsome face still peered towards the door, as if awaiting guests. The thick, crisp hair

curled over a high and narrow forehead; the face, shaped into a sharp angle, ended in a somewhat round chin, which was adorned with a little peaked beard. The face was otherwise clean shaven. The ears were quick, large, and animal, and seemed almost motive; and the scalp was loose on the forehead; so that, when César shrugged his foreign shoulders, or frowned with his brown, foreign forehead, the hair went up or came down, and played a not unimportant part in the dialogue. The tint of the face was a rich brown; the cheeks just reddened rather more deeply. The eyes were black, lustrous, full of laughter and merriment, or of gloomy, wild sadness, as the case may be. César looked like a man who had played many parts; and he had. He was, it was understood, a *protégé* of Lord Chesterton, and had been brought by that nobleman from Malta; but it was supposed, from his name, that he was the son of an Italian. However, from being the *protégé* and valet of the great Lord Chesterton, César had fallen to be the waiter at this foreign hotel, and was apparently regretting the change; for the kitten, having recovered from the pepper, and playing with the shoe-tie of the pensive Italian, was incautious enough to prick its claws through the thin stocking, and was rewarded by being sent flying, by a vigorous kick, right into the red waistcoat of a portly customer who entered at the moment.

"Hallo!" said that gentleman, with a good-natured English voice, catching the frightened animal and fondling it, "is that how you furriners treat kittens?"

"I beg pardon, m'sieu," answered the waiter, in very good English, "the cat has been scratching me, the brute! Why, if it isn't——Mr Brownjohn!" cried César, turning pale, and his eyes falling before the honest outlook of the Bow Street runner.

"César Negretti!" said that person. "So you've come down to this! Well, after being so well tiled in as you were, you deserve it. That little trick you had of borrowing his lordship's diamond buttons"——

"Hush!" said the waiter, putting his hand before the Bow Street runner's mouth. "Please be as silent as you can. That was a mistake."

"For which many a better man has danced on nothing

before nine o'clock A.M.," said Brownjohn, still fondling the kitten. "I don't like people who ill-use dumb animals. If she had not nine lives, you would have killed her. You've knocked half a one out of her."

"But you would not mind hanging a man," said César, spitefully.

"In the way of business, no," returned Brownjohn. "I'm after one now. That's why I came here. Bring me some soup, and some fried 'taties—*frit*, as they call them—and then a word with you."

Brownjohn, whom we left proceeding to London, had when there changed his plain dress for his official costume—a red waistcoat, frock coat, and top-boots; had taken his little brass staff with a crown on it, a warrant, a pistol, and other necessaries; and had spent some time about the docks, among the foreign sailors. He had been thoroughly foiled. On his mind's eye was painted clearly enough the figure of the foreign sailor described by the boy. But such a figure came not before his retina; nor could he, on account of imperfect scholarship, hold converse with the men. He had, therefore, come back to Soho, with the purpose of employing foreign aid; and here, ready to his hand, he very unexpectedly found it. He never lost his clue; but held on like grim death, as he said. It is true that his search was something like looking for a needle in a bottle, or pottle, of hay; but patient industry, even under such adverse circumstances, had, as Brownjohn well knew, been often rewarded.

César soon made his appearance with the soup, whisked away the dust from the table with quite a professional air, and stood before the officer, looking as if he had been a waiter all his life.

"You foreign fellows," said Samuel, swallowing his soup in full spoonfuls, "soon pick up a trade. You seem a natural born waiter, Negretti."

Brownjohn never forgot the name of one of his customers, and remembered every motion of the lithe Maltese. He intended his little speech as a compliment.

"A natural born fool, I think," said César, his dark eyes flashing with an ugly look, "to come here, and to meet you."

"Poor thing," said Brownjohn, taking the kitten out of his pocket as tenderly as if it were a china ornament. "Why, she's a happy little beast. I'm blowed tight if she is not purring!"

He set her down on his knee, and stroked her fur—the right way, too—with a strong, brown, but tender hand.

"Now, young fellow, I'd no more kick a kitten than I'd strike a woman."

César's contemptuous look, as he took away the soup, and put the *pommes de terre frites* before Brownjohn, said plainly, "And I'd do both if it suited me;" but he said nothing.

"I don't know," continued Brownjohn, "as you are such a fool, Negretti. I sha'n't hurt you. His lordship's kindness put you quite out of my jurisdiction. When we had that little business together, I did you some service. Now you can help me."

"How?" said César, quickly, his eyes sparkling, and his hair moving with his ears, backwards and upwards. "Can I get away from here—abroad, perhaps?"

"Well, you 've about guessed it. You are sharp. Can you be trusted?"

"By you?" asked César, his whole face changing into an expression of engaging innocence, and his white teeth glittering as he smiled. "By *you*, of course, Mr Brownjohn. Did you not show me the error of my ways, and that to be honest *was the best policy.* I am an altered man. I am religious. Here is my prayer-book!"

César fumbled in his pocket, but finding nothing but a pack of cards wrapped in the corner of his handkerchief, he contented himself with tapping his coat, as if it were his heart.

"You talk," said Brownjohn, "as if you were the chaplain of the House of Correction, or the ordinary of Newgate."

And then he contented himself with silence, broken only by crunching the crisp flakes of the potatoes.

César, looking at him, gave a little shudder—of expectation, perhaps—for he was as sensitive as a tightly strung instrument. Then, with a sigh, he said—

"You find those very dry work? Have some Burgundy."

"*Von* ordinary," grunted Brownjohn, "and very ordinary, too. No; British for me. You don't sell it here. You can

fetch it. Good Old Tom. Booth's best, if you please; and a glass for yourself."

The lithe Maltese, catching up the half-crown, and receiving a nod to the word "hot," flew out of the *salon;* and, before Brownjohn had finished his dish, returned with a tumbler of Old Tom, and one of rum. He always drank rum, he said, having been taught to do so by his Majesty's sea forces at Malta.

"Now, sir," he asked, standing respectfully before the Bow Street runner, "what do you want your humble servant for? Can I help you?"

"That's what I want to know," returned the ruminating Brownjohn. "Do you speak Dutch?"

"German—that will do. I can make out any thing that's said. Or French, or Italian, or Spanish. The job's over there, then?"

"May be," returned Brownjohn. "Look at this. You've heard of this murder, no doubt?"

And he brought from his pocket a copy of Mr Barnett Slammer's graphic account of what that personage had called the "Kensal-Green Tragedy," and the "Deed of Blood."

"No. We do not take English papers here," said César, coolly.

Then quietly turning his back to the officer, with a hand eager to serve, an eye greedy for such unpleasant excitement, Negretti, standing gracefully upright, so that the light could fall well upon the paper, read the true history through, and returned the journal, neatly folded, with a polite bow to the officer.

"And so you are after the miscreant?"

"That's wot you call him," said Brownjohn. "*I* call him a murderer, and I mean to hang him."

"If you catch him," interpolated César, in a blithe, humorous way, sitting down familiarly before Brownjohn. "That's your business."

"I'll do my duty"—here Brownjohn took a huge pull at the Old Tom, which seemed to give him a greater zest for his business; so that, taking hold of one arm of the Maltese—who, perhaps from delicacy, objected to it, and therefore quietly

removed the fingers of the police officer—he drew him towards him, and began unfolding his plans.

"You see," said Samuel, confidently, "I 'm stumped up here. I don't know what to do. I 'm gravelled completely. My parents did not send me to a university, or else they would have taught me all the furrin langwidges there. Of course they would, if I could have picked them up. And I 'm no fool on the march, I 'm not. There 's an old fellow on this lay, too, as is no fool neither; not that *I* tell him so—oh, no! I flatters no one. But he is on the wrong scent this time; and it 's a race between us. It 's a matter of reputation to me. Wrong he is; but he has a way of working matters out 'rithmetically, and he won't be wrong long. Now, I 'm on the right lay; and, as luck will have it, Providence"——

"Directed your steps," continued César, with an unction that almost might be called extreme unction.

"You are going in for a parson, you are. Well, directed my steps—I s'pose Providence and luck are the same—to this little crib and to you. And, perhaps, there is not a man in all London"——

"More fitted to help you," added César, as Mr Brownjohn had buried his face in his glass.

After this expression of the fitness of things, Mr Negretti buried his face in his glass; and then the two allies took a long breath, and looked at each other. Of the two, the experienced Bow Street runner—who would have described himself, in the language of Mr Boom's Slang Dictionary, as a "downy card," "up to a move or two," and not "wanting in change"—was by far the more simple character. Negretti, with that natural genius for bargaining which distinguishes the natives of his happy island, was considering how he could make the best bargain; and Brownjohn was dreaming of having, by César's help, already attained the supreme felicity of bringing the murderer to justice.

"Well," continued César, "I believe, Mr Brownjohn, that no one could help you better than I could. But how? You see this place of mine. I must give notice, and I don't like to"——

"Give it leg bail," said Brownjohn. "I'll warrant they

owe you something. They'll soon pick up another furriner, and they don't do much business."

"But for a consideration—think of the padrone, good sir," said Negretti, feeling all the while that an hour ago he would have given his ears for the chance.

"Well, I suppose a couple of sovereigns will square that. Go and tell the padrone, as you call him—pack up your kit and come along."

"Well," said César, after a pause, "I will be generous with you, and leave my countryman." Then with a spiteful look at the table, he flung off his apron and muttered, "And he can do the fetching and carrying himself, the beast! Have you the *gelt*, Mr Brownjohn? Don't you see, we must talk Dutch."

"Who said Dutch," asked Samuel, with a start, waking up from his reverie. "How sharp you are!"

"I mean to be. We want to be sharp in your profession. I recollect every word you said. Those two guineas, my friend." It was astonishing how eager the young man was to touch the gold. "The two guineas, and the money for the soup, my friend; and I will take leave of the padrone."

Mr Brownjohn, still in a brown study, produced the money, and sat caressing the purring kitten; while César, blithe as a bee, went backwards to find the padrone, and to pack up his box, taking with him but a small parcel, of which he was jealously careful. When he came back, the Bow Street runner was still contemplative. But César, who was joyous and beaming, having polished his clear brown face, and made his short black hair shine, awoke him with—

"Come, my friend, you are now the padrone, I will treat you. Here are two glasses of Curaçoa. Don't look at them as if they were poison."

"I'm rather tender with foreign stuff," said Brownjohn; "and I have not told you all I have to tell."

"Psha! We shall drink together. It is not drugged, Brownjohn. Take which you like."

"Wait a minute, my boy. Business first," returned the officer.

And then, with his hand on César's shoulder—César's eye running into the corner, and looking with a wicked disdain

and hatred of that hand the while—Brownjohn poured into the ear of the Maltese so clever and so succinct an account of *his* idea of the guilty person they were in search of, based upon "information that he had received," that César's face grew luminous and proudly conscious. As Brownjohn painted the sturdy sailor, with his earrings, his sunburnt face, his blouse, and his foreign accent in speaking of "Madame Marton," the idea was so fully received by the Maltese, that he jumped up hastily, and shook off the heavy hand of the thief-catcher.

"Stop! my dear friend," he said—"stop! enough! I can tell you, enough! Your picture is admirable. We will set out at once. I can see your picture. I shall not miss him. Drink to our good success. Drink, my Brownjohn. Drink like a Dutch fish. Ah! what it is to have a clear brain. Drink to fortune—to victory!"

"Why, Negretti, have you lost your senses?" asked Brownjohn, staring as he lifted the liquor to his lips.

"Not so, my Brownjohn," returned César, triumphantly. "Ah! how good sometimes is Madame Fortune! That *bourreau* has been kind to me at Malta. I know the man. Trust me, my Brownjohn. I will hunt him down like a beast of prey."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WATCHERS WATCHED.

Mr Brownjohn found that in his new ally he had not attracted all that he could wish. The systematic Englishman was as sure as he was slow, and desired especially to move in a dignified and regular way.

César Negretti laughed at these notions, and was for capturing the enemy by a series of brilliant surprises. Sam Brownjohn was content to go to a certain place—let us say, to a low public-house near Ratcliff Highway or the Docks—and there to await the advent of his victim, if "from information that he had received," which mysterious and useful phrase was then in the

womb of time, he suspected that the said victim would pass that way. This, which may be called the spider system of building a net, and waiting till a fly falls into it, is very useful, and, on the whole, successful; but it was far too prosaic for the ingenious and ingenuous César.

"Behold! my Brownjohn," he said one morning. "Regard me as equipped. We shall now prosecute our searches without suspicion."

To the Bow Street officer's London eyes, Negretti had done that which would call all the gazers of Europe after them; and if there was anything Brownjohn loved, it was to do a thing "on the quiet." Negretti, on the contrary, evidently loved that which was noisy and loud. He had exchanged his waiter's dress for a seafaring costume prevalent in Malta, and to be seen in and about Naples; or, indeed, which might pass current as far as Marseilles or the "Rock." Some of the wild seafarers who are to be seen at the "Gib" do, indeed, indulge in such picturesque attire as at once suggested itself to the artistic eye of the Maltese.

"Why, my eye!" cried Brownjohn, "if you ain't dressed out as if you was about to take a part at the Brunswick afore it fell down, or one of the low gaffs at the East-end. They will smell a rat and chivey us."

"Pah! my padrone! Leave to César what he knows. We are to search among foreign sailors, look you. They are accustomed to such toggery. Behold!"

César here pulled out of the pocket of a sailor's reefing jacket—which he wore over a blue Guernsey shirt, buckled round the waist with a black leather belt and brass buckle—a red nightcap, about as long as a waist-sash, and with a distinct and finely-developed tassel at each end. This he deftly doubled into its own inside, and put on the back of his head; and then, putting his hands in his jacket pockets, struck a defiant and seafaring attitude.

"I remember in your theatres, my Brownjohn, actors who did not look so much like the British tar as I do."

Brownjohn groaned inwardly, and outwardly remonstrated thus—

"Why, every one of the people will be up to our little lay.

They will be sure to smell out our plot. Why don't you keep it dark? There's nothing like doing a business thing in a business way, and on the quiet."

The restless eyes of Negretti, which watched Brownjohn quite as much as Brownjohn watched any other body, flared up into a kind of bonfire of contempt. César was one of those geniuses who felt contempt for everybody except himself, and who looked down upon all his employers—as he would, indeed, have looked down upon an archangel, had one asked him to go upon a message for him. Perhaps, if the archangel was one from the lowest depths, the Maltese might have accorded him some slight recognition, but not unless he had been so.

"You shall see. Your quiet way would set all the foreign sailors in a fright. Now, I am your nephew; you are my uncle. We look for a brother of yours, and another uncle of mine. You understand, Signor Padrone?"

"Well, it's one way," sighed Brownjohn; "and I suppose, as I can't go mine, we may as well go yourn. It's a queer way, anyhow. Come outside the crib, and let's begin our journey."

Out of the crib they came, César still bearing his bundle, and looking round with a feeling of relief as he went on his way. Brownjohn was right enough. In *his* neighbourhood the nautical dress of Negretti attracted many a gazer, one of whom was so amused as to follow the pair.

This was no less than Patsy Quelch.

Patsy's curiosity was of a longer date than the transformation of César; and Patsy is himself a character that must be introduced to the reader.

In the lower regions of the Strangers' Hotel—which was supposed to be brimming over with choice dishes, heads of game, haunches of venison, curious patties, and all sorts of foreign delicacies; but which only held one simmering stock soup, converted as occasion demanded into the soups asked for, and which brimmed over with no other game than cockroaches—lived the cook, the padrone, and Mr Quelch, named Patsy.

Patsy, the son of an Irish gentleman, a native of the Holy Land, as St Giles's was then profanely called, and of a Scotch

lady who had tramped up to London from one of the least salubrious wynds of Glasgow, was a London sparrow, or gutter bird of a well-known type. He had been so knocked about by father and mother—the father, who ill-used the mother, taking some pleasure in seeing her pass on the rude blows to their son, to whom he generously now and then dealt a spare blow himself—that when he came to years of discretion—that is to say, when Patsy was about ten—he one fine morning gave them leg-bail; that is, he ran away from the ancestral cellar.

When his mother summoned him, with an affectionate oath, to fetch the milk in the morning, there was no answer; and although the paternal voice was heard to address him in a fond way as the "thafe of the wer'rld," and to beg him "to come out o' dat, or else ivry single bone" in his skin would be collectively broken, Patsy never responded. He had followed a Punch and Judy firm to its West-end pitch; had got lost near Shepherd's Bush; was taken up by the watch; declared he was an orphan; he was treated as such, by being affectionately sent to a workhouse, and in due time apprenticed to a shoemaker. The shoemaker was not a bad master, but a severe one; and in a short time it occurred to Patsy that he might escape hard and confining work, with now and then some strap oil, by running eastwards into town. Being decently clothed, and asking civilly for employment from door to door, Patsy was soon engaged as waiter at the Hôtel des Etrangères, in Rupert Street. Here the boy, who had blossomed into a good-looking "gossoon" of fifteen, found he was in his element. He had very little to do, had plenty to eat, and now and then picked up some halfpence from the couriers and valets who frequented the hotel. He even learnt something of foreign languages; and was in the height of success and happiness, when the superior attraction of César Negretti nipped his hopes in the bud. Patsy was banished to the kitchen, to help the very clever but uncertain genius who cooked for the hotel; to bring up dishes to the top of the stairs; to be seen, but not heard; and to meditate within his warm and impulsive heart a deadly hatred to César.

As for that foreign gentleman, he looked upon Patsy as a grub, a mere reptile. He would have put his foot upon him

with as little compunction as a worm. With a quick ear to inflection, he soon discovered Patsy's country, and called him Irish; not as if it were an honour—as it is—to belong to that beautiful and fertile land, but as if the very fact carried with it a disgrace. Patsy burnt for revenge, and set his quick wits to work to find out a way to accomplish it.

César's presence brought no luck to the Strangers' Hotel. With a volubility not at all confined or bound down by any conscientious adherence to truth, Signor Negretti had assured the padrone that his presence would not only be an attraction to the hotel, but that he had many friends—let us say princes in disguise, or dukes wandering in search of the picturesque—who would be quite delighted to come and honour the *salon;* nay, who might, perhaps, give dinners thereat to the members of the English aristocracy, whose names César so volubly rattled out. Perhaps the padrone was sanguine; perhaps he was desperate; mayhap he was convinced. At any rate, he closed with César's proposition, and installed him as chief waiter, in which responsible station Brownjohn had found him.

It happened that on the very day that César kicked the kitten into Brownjohn's stomach, he had commenced the morning by kicking Mr Quelch, whom he called an Irish *cochon.*

Patsy knew enough of foreign languages to appreciate the insult; and the warmth of his feelings towards his Maltese superior and guide gained somewhat in intensity. A courier who breakfasted at the hotel—upon Parmesan cheese, stewed with tripe, onions, pieces of ox cheek, and small circles of carrot, washed down with a pint of *vin ordinaire*—was so pleased with his breakfast, that Patsy saw, with a pang of bitter regret, that Negretti pocketed a shilling as a douceur. Perhaps the courier had himself been paid extra wages; perhaps he regarded the voluble César as his friend and countryman; certain it was that Patsy saw him finger and pocket a coin which he looked upon as his own. The wild spirit of revenge which inspires Patsy's ejected countrymen took possession of him. Was he not ejected too?

The interview between Brownjohn and César, the passage

of gold between them, the whispered talk, the fact that César treated the half-slumbering padrone, who was consoling himself in the kitchen by drinking and playing dominoes with the cook, while he bewailed his want of custom, and his heavy rent; and the hurried manner in which the waiter packed his bundle—about which he was naturally careful—awakened a dozen suspicions in Patsy's bosom.

"Here, you Irish *cochon*—you pig, you," said the triumphant César; "I am going to leave your sty to yourself. Here is a drink-money for you."

And he threw at Patsy a newly-coined fourpenny-piece, as the smallest bit of silver he could give, which had the bad luck to miss Patsy's hand and to roll down a crack in the kitchen floor.

"Yah! butter-fingers," said the polyglot valet, in the purest slang. "Can't hold anything. Well, good-bye, *cochon*. I will leave you all the wash!"

Insult was added to injury. Patsy could have flown at the throat of the Maltese. He contented himself with a watchful look and a silent curse; and rose from his seat to follow and to watch Negretti.

He saw Brownjohn drink his liquor with a wry face and a cough, and knew well enough what he was. Patsy was on the *qui vive* at once, and determined to follow his enemy; and, with the step of a cat or a wild Indian, flew to the door of the Hôtel des Etrangères, and watched the retreating figure of Mr Samuel Brownjohn and his new ally.

When they, going northward, turned towards the east, and were about to cross the mazy and by no means salubrious purlieus of the Holy Land—poor Patsy's birthplace—that young gentleman, pulling his cap out of his pocket, and hastily seizing a French roll from one of the tables as provender, gave a short, low, wild cry, as does a cat when it springs on a wall; and with little definite idea of what he was about to do, disappeared after them on his self-instituted watch.

So, following Negretti, step by step—outside cellars and drinking-shops, down by the docks or Ratcliff Highway, where crimps and Jews kept watch for Jack—slunk Mr Patsy Quelch.

Crowds of citizens ventured down in those purlieus—where, in the streets near the docks, a perpetual fair went on day and night—to buy bargains from abroad. Sailors with strange birds, sailors with Japanese boxes and Chinese wares, were to be met and dealt with; sailors who were real, with China silks and India muslins; also sailors who were unreal, but who looked much more natural than the true ones, who had painted birds, Manchester silks, and Birmingham imitations of foreign goods.

In the crowd and the atmosphere of cheatery, César was in his element. He crossed himself, said his prayers, talked the wildest blasphemy a moment afterwards, quarrelled with the passengers, and offered to put a knife into half a dozen all at once; grinned, showed his teeth, made his hair and his ears move, and surprised the stolid Brownjohn by his cleverness. His costume, curious in the City or Soho, fitted well into the landscape at the seaport of London. His volubility and good-nature gained them friends. To every man he told a different lie; but his cross-examination was masterly.

Soon he had discovered traces of the Dutch sailor.

"My Brownjohn," he said, after triumphantly drinking as much rum as would have staggered the strong head of the Bow Street runner, "we are on the point of victory. Our man is as good as caught. We must, however, be towards the country. Our friend is *en province*."

"Which way?" asked Brownjohn.

"They tell me by Stroud or Rochester. I am, you understand, very fond of him. He is my long-lost uncle."

"Is he?" grunted Samuel. "I wish I had him up at Bow Street. I am glad Old Daylight has not got the start of me."

"Great events," said César, sententiously, "require proper time, my Brownjohn. And now, since we have been so far successful, let us eat."

Brownjohn being himself hungry, some smoking hot boiled beef soon was set before them, and with an excellent appetite, César fell to. He was full of his fun. He made the most atrocious propositions to Brownjohn as to some new method of making money by accepting bribes from prisoners; laughed when the honest runner looked aghast at him; sang snatches

of song while waiting for his plate to be renewed; and showed how thoroughly he enjoyed his new occupation.

"Look, my Brownjohn," said he, suddenly, as a slinking figure passed the cook-shop, and gazed hungrily at the inside; "how those gutter Irish resemble each other. There is a figure like that *cochon* Patsy. Ah! I forgot, you do not know the little wretch at the cabaret. *Allons*, let us drink, if we can find a public-house where the *rhum* is not new."

The guests left the eating-house, and went forward on the Dover Road; nor had they left it many moments before a footsore figure limped into the shop, and hastily buying four-penny worth of beef, stuffed it deftly into the bowels of a penny roll that he had with him, and then limped onwards after those whom he tracked.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SLOW BUT CERTAIN LAW MARKS DOWN ITS PREY.

CHESTERTON HOUSE is situated close to the most fashionable square in London, and it stands in a ring-fence of stone and brick wall; so that no one could well leave it unobserved, while every one who approached could be well marked and watched.

Old Daylight, accompanied by Inspector Stevenson, kept close watch—for his own good reason—for some time, in the immediate vicinity.

When Mr Roskell creaked forth, wearing the Scotch cap which the valets and stewards of the aristocracy much affect, he was conned and noted by a curious old gentleman who, in Hessian boots and a spencer, seemed to be vastly interested in the upper windows of a house in the dull and aristocratic neighbourhood opposite. Mr Roskell took no notice of him; but Mr Tom Forster, whose time had come, was not sorry to see the steward stroll off for his morning's walk in the park.

It was the day after the dinner, and conversation following it, which Philip had had with his father.

The young man had slept but little, and was pacing the room in which hung the protraits of his ancestors, the genealogical tree of the Stanfields, and the arms which Edgar Wade had so much admired. Philip was awaiting his father's appearance; but the old lord, who had slept as little during the night, had, towards morning, fallen into a profound but uneasy sleep, in which the events of thirty years before—events seldom out of his mind—came back to him in dreams.

Suddenly, as Philip was abstractedly gazing at the polished swords hanging in their rack, the door opened, and the valet, with a face of wonder—or, rather, of blank and unpleasant surprise—ushered in two gentlemen, who trod so closely on his heels that they seemed rather unwilling to let him get out of their sight.

"Lord Wimpole *is* at home," said the servant.

"That will do," said the shorter of the two strangers, with an extraordinary and precise rudeness, as the valet thought. "Now you can go. We shall not want anything. We have a coach outside."

"A coach, gentlemen!" said his lordship, with an uneasy surprise, as if he dreaded some new misfortune. "What is the matter? Are any of my friends ill?"

"Pray, don't alarm yourself, my lord," exclaimed the taller of the two, Mr Inspector Stevenson; while Old Forster, carefully putting the servant outside, shut the door. "I presume you are"——

"Philip Desvœux Stanfield, commonly called Lord Wimpole?" ejaculated Old Daylight.

"I am he, sir," returned Philip, proudly; forgetting, in the suddenness of the attack, the recent terrible disclosures.

"Then you are our prisoner."

"Upon what charge, gentlemen?"

"Only murder, my lord; that's all," said Inspector Stevenson, with imperturbable coolness. "Don't be alarmed. Do not say anything to criminate yourself. We are police officers, and shall report every word. Take things coolly and come along with us; and we shall use no violence. We are always polite to gentlemen, when they behave as such."

And the cool Inspector held out the warrant signed by George

Horton, one of his Majesty's magistrates for the county of Middlesex, for Philip's inspection.

Philip read the warrant, and his heart sank within him.

"How can I clear myself," he muttered, "from this evil thing?" Then lifting his head, he asked, "Will you let me call my father?"

"Well, you had better not. Take what things you want with you, and come along with us. Lord bless you, it's nothing, if you can prove an *alibi;* and a nobleman like you can always do that. I should quietly resign myself to our hands, say nothing, come and hear the charge, and send for my solicitor. That's the cleverest way out of a nasty job, that I know of," said the Inspector, in a kindly way.

Philip thought so, too; and walked into his own room, closely followed by the Inspector.

"Can I not be here in private?" he asked, as the strong hand of the policeman prevented the door from being shut in his face.

"Well, not exactly," returned Stevenson. "I don't want to intrude, my lord, nor to be rude—not I. It's not our way of doing things. You see, when once I have my eye on you—you are my charge, you see; and I never let my eye off my charge, sleeping nor waking, until I have put the charge in somebody else's charge. That's the law, and very sensible law, too."

As Lord Wimpole said not a word, but merely dressed himself—he was deadly pale—Mr Stevenson still continued his pleasing conversation, out of a good-natured wish to prevent his lordship being under any restraint. For the same reason he looked out of the window, and admired the portrait of the Countess of Chesterton, which he afterwards pronounced, with the air of a connoisseur, to be a "first-rate bit of painting."

Mr Stevenson's harmless prattle fell into dull ears. Philip was as much beside himself as if he had been an innocent girl of sixteen. The Inspector—who, to do him justice, would have behaved as coolly and as considerately if he had been arresting a clerk for a vulgar forgery—every now and then threw in a remark, looking delicately out of the windows as Philip attired himself.

"Yes, we are very sensible in criminal cases, except in the

way of barristers. As a rule, I don't much admire barristers; they make a deal too much fuss, and often upset a case—especially family barristers. Don't you employ one, my lord."

Philip started at this vulgar, friendly advice.

"If chancery and equity, and all kinds o' law, were done down to, or rather up to, the criminal standard, this country would be all the better for it," said the Inspector, glancing at his prisoner, and seeing that his hand trembled as he tied his cravat, and that he was not quite ready.

Then, after a pause—

"There's no need to hurry, my lord. We never hurry people. Time goes fast enough with our customers. Yes, family barristers are troublesome. They don't know the practice of our courts, and they take liberties with the officers and magistrates, to the prejudice of the prisoners. Then they say too much. Now, the best Old Bailey man that I know—Mr Serjeant Jawkins—can talk when he likes, and he can be silent when he likes. Bless you, he had a rare case the other day. An old woman poisoned a hinfant, as plain as if I'd done it myself. (I'll just see what you take from that drawer, if you please. Oh! studs, is it? Beg pardon; all right!) He assumed that his client was quite innocent, o' course; and after he had made us very merry, says he—'And for my unfortunate client—for she is unfortunate, to be innocently in such a position—what shall I say? Nothin', absolutely nothin'. I leave her case, gentlemen o' the jury, to your common sense.' Thereon he throws down his papers, puts his hands in his weskit holes, and smiles beneficently at the jury. They turn round in the box, and bring her in not guilty, of course. Ah! Jawkins is *your* man, my lord."

It was, perhaps, lucky for the good-natured Inspector that at that moment Old Forster knocked at the door.

"All right outside?" asked Stevenson. "We're nice and ready now."

And as the two walked out, Old Daylight, who had the blue serge bag of a lawyer under his arm, walked in.

"Got what you want?" asked Stevenson.

Old Daylight nodded, with a knowing look.

"My friend would just like to look round the apartment,"

said the Inspector, with much politeness. "We will step outside. He's a very gentlemanly man, and won't toss over the things. He's getting up the case."

"What case?" asked Philip, wearily.

"Why, your case, o' course. He's got it in hand. I'm only a supernumerary. Bless you, he's very clever, and as harmless as a dove; on'y I'd much rather have Old Daylight on my side than against me. That's my opinion. And now, my lord, we will go out. Mr Forster will follow."

"Stay one moment," cried Philip, with a sudden pang, as he pressed his hand to his side. "You will let me write a letter?"

"Provided I see it, my lord, and knows to whom it is going."

Philip looked up, flushed at the insult.

"It is a private letter to a young lady," he answered. "It cannot concern you."

"That depends, my lord. I shall only look at it professionally."

Philip saw that there was only one thing to do, and that was to submit. He sat down mechanically, and wrote a few words to Winifred Vaughan, stating that he was accused of some dreadful crime, and showed the note to the police officer, who glanced over it and the address, and let his prisoner seal it and give it to a valet. Then—as Mr Tom Forster was quite ready, and trotted out of the room with a few small objects in his lawyer's blue moreen bag—the three walked coolly downstairs, where the valet was waiting, and ready to offer Lord Wimpole his hat and gloves, and then out into the courtyard, where a hackney coach, the panels of which blazed with the arms of some rich dowager in a gorgeous heraldic mantle, was waiting for them.

How quietly the whole thing was done! In the dramas of the period, the curtain would fall in the midst of a scene, the villain protesting his innocence, while a beautiful young lady, in a charming attitude and in a fainting fit, fell into the arms of the friend of the hero. It was curious that Philip thought of this, with a smile; and felt very thankful to Mr Tom Forster and the Inspector for their kindness. As for those

two estimable persons, they behaved to Lord Wimpole with much the same gentleness that they would have shown to the poorest culprit they ever arrested. The few words they exchanged as they were driven along bore no reference to the case in hand. Englishmen are not very demonstrative, and official Englishmen are wise in their determined silence. What they have is to do, not to talk.

The rumbling coach creaked and rattled on in so quick a transit, that Philip had not recovered from his dazed dismay before he had descended from the crazy conveyance, and had passed into the private room, awaiting Mr Horton.

That gentleman was consulting his colleague, Mr Boom, who had been seized with an industrious fit, and good-naturedly offered to relieve his colleague for several weeks. He had been philanthropically trying to persuade Mr Horton that half the crimes of the poor were owing to their bad lodgings and worse surroundings, and half apologising for the easy way in which he dismissed those who were brought before him.

"My dear Horton," he said, "if you and I were to live down one of those terrible alleys in Drury Lane, with squalling children, and an untidy, unkempt, and fractious wife, don't you think that we should be glad to escape from them into a public-house? I know that *I* should. I like my glass of wine now—I should be fond of my glass of gin then."

"It is very possible," said Horton; "but poverty, which brings its trials, should bring its lessons. To a working man, a momentary debauch is not an escape from misery: it rather binds him to it. The grog he drinks, which excites him for the moment, does not really exhilarate him. He ought to know this as well as I do. It maddens and poisons."

"Quite right," returned his colleague. "All that is as plain as A, B, C. Adulterated gin maddens and excites: the man is a fool, a madman, under its influence. That 's why I am lenient."

"That 's why I should be severe," said the other.

"Bad dwellings are the foundation of this miserable business," continued Mr Boom. "Bad wives and bad food the second step. General ignorance, ill health, and discontent the next. And the whole is crowned by crime. Poor people! who can condemn them?"

And here the magistrate took a gilt toothpick from his pocket, and, after meditatively using it, turned to speak to the clerk, who was making out certain depositions in some case which does not concern us here.

Mr Horton, still unconvinced, was about to answer, when the door which led from the court to the magistrates' room opened, and the square, intellectual head of Inspector Stevenson, tightly fixed on to his broad shoulders and deep chest by a military collar of a blue frock coat, which made him look like a staff officer in undress, appeared at the door, and his lips were seen to articulate the name of Mr Horton.

That gentleman at once rose and went to his summoner.

"We 've got him, sir," said the Inspector, "and all right. He is in the private room, and it is wonderful what a cool hand he is. Old Daylight 's right, for a sovereign. His lordship made no more of being arrested than I should of going out to breakfast."

This—said in a whispered tone, between the two doors of the short passage which led from the court to the private room—was intended to prepare the magistrate for his new charge. But it was not sufficient to prevent the good gentleman from experiencing a curious revulsion of feeling. Somehow or another, conscience seemed to whisper, "Do not try that man; give over this business to your colleague. You are not unbiased." Then, again, old scraps of plays and poems would occur to him: "Murder most foul, as in the best it is, but this *most* foul;" and then his own conscience would make common cause with Lord Wimpole.

Nothing of this struggle was seen on the magistrate's face. He walked quietly into the room, and was about to sit down at his table—his eyes were cast down upon the ground—when Lord Wimpole gladly, almost joyously, sprang up to shake hands with him.

"O Mr Horton!" he said, "I am so glad to meet you! In this trouble, it is quite refreshing to meet an old friend."

The young man had stretched out his hand in the frankest and most jovial way. All his troubles seemed for the moment forgotten. Mr Horton suddenly faced round, crossed his arms, and looked at Philip with the cold, meaningless stare that

Englishmen can so well put on when they wish to be cruelly rude.

"My lord!" he said.

And his voice, often so soft and musical, grated with a hard resonancy as he spoke.

Lord Wimpole first turned red and then pale. Then, turning haughtily on his heel, he said—

"I forgot, Mr Horton, or I would not have insulted you. I said we were old friends. I did not at once realise our altered stations. I am the prisoner, and you are my judge."

CHAPTER XX.

"I DO CONJURE YOU, PLEAD; SPEAK, BE NOT DUMB."

THE words of Philip Stanfield cut the magistrate to the heart. He was one of those unhappy men, whose name is legion, who, always watching over their feelings, and intending to do the "right thing," somehow let their passions slip out of their hands just when they chiefly desire to hold them. Mr Horton would have given the world to have received Lord Wimpole coolly, and even generously; and yet, at his first interview, he by some means managed to insult him.

His next step was to motion Philip to a chair, and then to look in a meaning way at Old Daylight and the Inspector, who forthwith disappeared. After this, the way being cleared, he spoke—

"Really, my lord," the harsh, dry voice of the magistrate was heard to say, "I must apologise. I forgot myself. We cannot be said to have established those relations you spoke of between us yet. A man is not guilty, in English law, at least, until he is tried and condemned."

The apology was as bad as the insult. Lord Wimpole winced under it, but answered—

"Oh, sir, pray do not spare the feelings of so poor a thing as I am. I have fallen, indeed, in my own opinion, and, as I perceive, in those of others, since—since a few short days. I

begin to perceive the full meaning of the Hebrew curse, when destruction cometh unawares upon a man, and his friends privily and secretly hide themselves out of his path."

These words were so simply and so pathetically said, that Mr Horton felt somewhat uncomfortable under them. And yet Philip did not intend them as a reproach. He merely repeated what was to him a very bitter truth, and the force of which he felt very intensely. How it was that Mr Horton felt the reproach the reader knows. That gentleman now thought that the best way to put an end to the embarrassment that was growing upon him and the prisoner, was to proceed at once to action.

"We will not, if you please, my lord," said the magistrate, "talk of friends or of enemies. Justice can regard none of either. All that we have now to ascertain is the truth of the charge against you."

"Exactly," returned Philip, in a dazed state.

This dreamy dulness, occasioned, no doubt, by the force of the blow, and that force itself being intensified from the contrast afforded by the uninterrupted prosperity and happiness that he had hitherto enjoyed, now and then came over the young nobleman like a cloud, and its presence was construed variously. Inspector Stevenson thought that it was an excellent specimen of what was known as "shamming Abraham," a slang expression which, according to Mr Boom, was as old as the time of Shakespeare, and perhaps older than that; as, indeed, all or most of our slang is. Mr Horton, a much deeper student of humanity, construed this half-intelligent expression as a combination of nervous dread and of innocence. Mr Tom Forster, who was admirably clear in his own way, but not always in others, had settled it in his mind as an aristocratic method of exhibiting an impudent *sang-froid*. He had read how gaily the French noblemen went to execution, and with what pains some of them sought to show their captors and persecutors how well they could bear misfortune; and while he admired Lord Wimpole's behaviour, he confounded his impudence right royally. Thus a great part of the world, perpetually seeking for motives, look far into the

field, while the most natural explanation of mental phenomena lies at their feet.

Philip's next exclamation would have been deemed the very height of impudence by Old Daylight, had he heard it.

"You are, of course, aware upon what charge you are brought here," said Mr Horton.

"I really," said Lord Wimpole—

"Pray don't speak yet," interrupted the magistrate. "This is quite a preliminary business. Nevertheless, every word you may say I shall take a note of, and it may be used against you. I should, were I in your place, at once send for my legal adviser. Unfortunately, in this country, we none of us study that which is so essential for us to know—the laws which affect us in every transaction of life. Pray permit me to read over the charge against you, and pray listen attentively. If you are innocent, a gentleman in your position, all whose movements are known—in fact, a person in any position—can, unless under a most unlikely and unforeseen combination of circumstances, clear himself at once."

Philip began, while the magistrate was speaking in his clear and impressive manner, to look round the room, and to awaken to the realities of his position. He noticed the pattern of the oilcloth, by the clear October sun, which threw a light into the room through a large but strongly-barred window; the bare, official look of the apartment; the strong Windsor chair in which he sat; the calm, pale face of his companion sitting before his desk opposite him; and the stiff rattle of the blue official paper he held in his hand. Then the events of the last few days came back to him; the dinner and conversation of yesterday; the grief and trouble he had suffered; the misery painted upon the face of his father when he left him; the loss of all that was dear to him. As these came back—the more bitterly because of their short absence—the young man covered his face with his hands, and listened.

The cool, calm voice, no longer harsh, of Mr Horton, fell upon his ears now clear and distinctly; and Philip heard the charge which he at first, however strange it may seem, had absolutely not comprehended. That he was taken into custody upon some dire and dreadful accusation, that those who

arrested him were officers of the police, and that the warrant was duly signed by some magistrate, was all that he clearly knew. For the first time, in that bare and cold room, as bare to him as the walls of a prison, he felt wholly his position.

At the charge of murder, he started and rose up. At the name of Estelle Martin, the young man uttered a cry of despair so pitiable, so pathetic, so clear, and yet so low, that the police-officers in the inner room, who were waiting to be summoned, heard it, and were ready at once to enter—but that they heard the clear tones of the magistrate continue the interrogation.

"Surely, you knew all this, my lord," the magistrate was heard to say, "else why are you here?"

Philip explained in broken tones to Mr Horton what he felt; and that until the present moment he knew hardly anything of the charge. The magistrate looked at him in a searching, curious way. Could he believe this young man? he asked himself. Was it possible that a man could be arrested without strictly comprehending the reason? Then he paused; and, remembering the history which Tom Forster had told him, no longer wondered, but looked at Philip with pity.

"You knew this woman, Estelle Martin?" he asked.

"I have seen her," said Philip, simply.

"You were acquainted with her neighbourhood, and with her little house?"

"Acacia Villa? Yes—I have heard of it. This murder, of which I now comprehend the full significance, is of terrible import to me."

"Indeed it is," said Horton, severely, looking at Philip, and beginning to waver in his opinion.

"I can assure you, upon my honour, upon my oath if need be, that I am entirely innocent of it," said the accused.

"Alas! my lord," returned Horton, "in such a case as this neither your honour nor your oath is of any avail. You do not belong to the House of Peers yet; and we do not try even the heir-apparent to an earldom before his peers; nor do the jurors, especially the accused, pronounce or plead upon his honour."

Philip's head fell. He thought how little claim he had to any title now.

"All that you have to do is to show me, by witnesses and by irrefragable proof, that you were not at Acacia Villa on the night of the murder. It took place between six and nine on the night of September the twenty-ninth. It is not so far distant, that date, but that your lordship can tell me where you were then."

Lord Wimpole let his head sink into his hands, and appeared lost in thought.

"I am perfectly innocent of this crime," he murmured.

"Where, then, were you on that night?"

The young man was silent.

"Remember," continued Horton, "that it is by favour that this preliminary examination is thus continued: the wish to spare your father and your family. It is quite possible, of course"—here Mr Horton so inflected his voice as to convey the assurance, which was gathering upon him, that the matter to him was beyond doubt—"it is quite possible that you are entirely innocent."

"I am quite so," reiterated Lord Wimpole; "but"——

"But what? Matters are too serious for 'buts.' If you have anything to say to *me*, you can tell me privately."

Just then the proposal of marriage made by Horton to Winifred Vaughan occurred to Philip in a singularly forcible manner, and he answered nothing. The magistrate imagined that his prisoner was reflecting, and affected to mend his pen, glancing now and again at him. So long a time elapsed that it was he who first spoke.

"I may help your memory, Lord Wimpole," he said. "On the twenty-ninth of September, in the morning, about eleven o'clock, as I imagine, Mr Edgar Wade, barrister, of the Temple, called upon you upon important business."

The young lord turned pale. Upon important business indeed!—upon business that had changed his whole life to bitterness!

"You must recall what you did upon that day. You cannot have so much forgotten what you have done."

Lord Wimpole was still silent. At last, and with an effort, he raised his head, looked at his questioner, and said faintly—

"I have not forgotten."

"Then," returned Horton with a hopeful manner—for his generosity now got the better of him, and he began to plead for the young man so entangled and so terribly tried—"then, my lord, you can surely say where you were. You may tell me, and I will advise you—as, indeed, I would do any one so unhappily situated as your are—for the best."

"Pardon me," returned Philip, still faintly, but resolutely, "I cannot say."

"What you have said is quite sufficient," said Horton, curtly—for he had a lingering belief in Philip's innocence, and was annoyed at his obstinacy—"would be quite sufficient to cause me to commit you; but I must certainly remand you, and keep you closely confined in the meantime. Let me beg of you, if you have been—as other young men in your station too often have been—in improper company, and have any punctilio"——

"Then you imagine something so utterly foreign to my habit and nature—indeed, to what is demanded of me by my conscience," said Philip, proudly—"that I can only say you do not know me. I should have no punctilio in answering for a shameful companion, had I one. But I have not, and still I elect to remain silent."

Mr Horton heard his prisoner with a kind of pity. Something within him whispered that the accused was innocent of the crime; and yet before the magistrate there was but one course.

"If," he said to Philip, "you are determined that the whole world shall know of this disgrace upon a noble family, you are taking the right course. I ask you again, and for the last time—Where were you on the evening in question?"

Philip remained obstinately silent.

Thereon the magistrate rang a bell, and Mr Tom Forster, alias Old Daylight, came in with a brisk step, followed by Inspector Stevenson. Still silent, Lord Wimpole watched the movements of these officers with a curious interest.

"I have interrogated this gentleman," said the magistrate to Forster, "and I cannot learn from him how he was occupied on the night of the twenty-ninth of September."

"Commonly called Michaelmas Day," said Mr Forster, look-

ing severely at the rival of his *protégé* and heir. "Vulgar people usually have roast goose for dinner: the day is memorable on that account."

Then Mr Forster stopped—he did not want to be garrulous; but there reigned so mournful a silence in the official room, that he said something out of pure good-nature.

"There 's only a very little time to be accounted for," he said, slowly untying the strings of his blue serge bag, and noting that the eyes of the accused man watched his hands with curious interest. "There 's only a very little time to be accounted for. Bonaparte used to say that he lost or won all his battles—won I think it was; for he only lost some very great ones, after all—by a short quarter of an hour. I don't recollect the French, or I 'd give it your worship. Well, these little jobs that we are asking about don't take long. Probably, much shorter than a quarter of an hour—so frail is human life. People don't do beating, and cutting, and hacking; an angry blow, or a stab, your worship"—here the old gentleman affected to find the knot of his bag a difficult one—"or a stab, your worship," he reiterated, "generally finishes the matter."

During this little speech—in making which Mr Forster felt that he was taking a great liberty—Old Daylight kept his eyes on the prisoner. Philip certainly started when he said "stab," because Forster jerked out the word in a spiteful and sudden manner; but beyond that, he still watched the old fellow as if all the world were on its trial rather than himself, and he were a quiet and unconcerned witness.

By this time the bag was undone, and Old Daylight had plunged one brawny, brown arm and hand in it. At the door stood the Inspector, quiet, impassible, and like a statue, save that his eyes moved and glittered. It was plain to Philip that the interest of all three was fixed intensely upon him, but still he said nothing.

Mr Horton arranged and rearranged his notes.

"They generally do this kind of work abroad with a stab. Here they knock you down, and beat out your brains; which, in my opinion, after a good deal of experience, is much the nicer and more British fashion."

"There 's a fashion in murders, then," thought the silent Philip to himself; "and this rude old gentleman seems to be a connoisseur of the proprieties of the trade."

In spite of himself, he could not help allowing a smile to slightly curl his lip: a smile not unmarked by the magistrate —nor, indeed, by either of the three.

"Well, he is a cool hand!" thought Inspector Stevenson. "He knows how to carry it with a high feather in his bonnet."

On the other hand, Old Daylight was puzzled.

"He is as cool as if he had committed a dozen murders," he muttered to himself.

"The time to be accounted for," said the magistrate—making his own deductions from the behaviour of the accused—"is, let us say"—here he consulted his notes—"from half-past six of the evening until nine o'clock P.M.: two hours and a half. The Widow Estelle Martin was seen alive at half-past six on that day."

"And spoken to," ejaculated Mr Forster. "At half-past nine, or something about that time, she was struck down by some person unknown, and stabbed in the back with a sharp, narrow instrument—such as this."

Here the old gentleman quietly took out of his bag the broken end of a foil.

Even Mr Horton started. Philip seemed to regard the foil without curiosity, and without emotion.

"That is my property," he said, coolly.

"It 's the property of the Crown now," returned Daylight, curtly. "Also, here is a light pair of gloves, the presence of which Mr Horton will understand. Also a boxing or fencing glove, the thumb of which is torn; some cigars, a cigar-holder, and a pair of boots, soiled, but scarcely, I think, with London mud."

"All of which you took from Chesterton House this very morning," said Philip, coolly. "They belong to me. Of what use is their presence here?"

"Will you tell me," again asked the magistrate, "what you were doing during that short time on the twenty-ninth."

Philip said, shortly, without waiting to consider—

"I cannot."

"My duty," said the magistrate, "is then to remand you on the charge of murder. These matters here are very important in the chain of evidence; but I will, out of consideration to yourself and family, give you time for thought, and also for consulting your solicitor. You must, of course, remain here in custody. Inspector Stevenson will take charge of you. Have you no one with whom you wish to communicate?"

The unhappy young man rose and looked around him, but said nothing for a moment. Then, remembering the advice of the Inspector, and glancing at his honest face as that of a friend, he said—

"The solicitors of my family would be of little use in such a case, I presume. I know of no one to whom I could apply. I will think over this in the seclusion you send me to. But, perhaps, Mr Horton, as you may know Mr Edgar Wade, you will kindly ask him if he will defend me? And now, sir, I am ready."

So saying, Lord Wimpole quietly followed Inspector Stevenson to the lock-up.

"Phew!" whistled Old Daylight. And then he whispered to the magistrate, "Well, that is cool! He wants Edgar Wade to defend him! If I were"——

"Mr Edgar Wade will act as an English barrister always does," said Mr Horton, sternly. "If he accepts his retainer, he will do his best for him. I will see that he is communicated with."

"What will the world come to?" asked Old Daylight of himself, as he packed up his blue bag and prepared to go home.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT CHESTERTON HOUSE.

THE magistrate had remained alone in his room, revolving, like the pious Æneas, many things in his mind, while Philip Stanfield was led quietly across the yard, upon each side of which stood a series of small closets, that looked as much like the tool-houses of a country house as anything else. Inspector

Stevenson was much struck with his prisoner's behaviour. Here was to him a great question. Was this swell a rogue or fool? As regarded Old Forster, it was certain he could not make a mistake. Mr Forster was too clever to be taken in; he had got the right man, he had. Well, then, what on earth did this swell mean by not having an *alibi* ready, and not pressing for bail, and having his old governor up?

His old governor! Poor man! the bitterest feeling, which came every now and then with recurrent force, was that which told Philip that his father would soon find out the new disgrace that had befallen him.

In the meantime, the whole basement of Chesterton House was revolutionised by the news. We, who live in the parlours, think that our servants know nothing about our private affairs; and that we can do this or that without being observed. How loftily we say, "Oh, those people take no interest in us. We can discuss these matters before them quite easily; they are beyond their comprehension." And all the while Jenny knows more than her mistress; and Joseph, the page boy, with his smooth face, is in possession of one or two secrets which, if *you* knew that *he* knew, your ears would tingle.

Chesterton House was as well ordered as any house in the three kingdoms, especially below stairs. The servants, who reflect the habits of their superiors, as, indeed, most of us do, if we be not superior ourselves, were thoroughly orderly and good; indeed, the steward's room was a pattern to many a gentleman's house.

Mr Roskell, when he creaked back again, in his pumps and Scotch cap, after his morning's walk, quietly read the *Morning Pillar* and Mr R. Coaster's "News of the Aristocracy."

"Let me see," he would say, "what is doing. Is Lord Splinterbar going to sell his stud yet? Is young Lord Boohoo coming of age?—because we are going down there when he does do so, to assist at those festivities. Bother festivities! say *I*, from my point of view. What's old Mother Sark going to do? *Thé dansant!* is she—a mean old wretch. Whenever Lord Wimpole goes to one of them *thés dansants*, he comes home as hungry as a hunter."

In the steward's room, the company, duly waited upon by

the lower servants, consisted of the Earl's valet, out of livery; Mr Roskell; Mr Gurgles, the butler; and young Mr Checketts, Lord Wimpole's valet, also out of livery. These gentlemen were honest, honourable, good servants; quite content to do their duty, and doing it, too, very much better, and with very much less noise and fuss, than some upper members of society.

Mr Gurgles, the butler, had good wages and certain perquisites. These he strictly adhered to. Out of these perquisites, he furnished his friends with a very good bottle of wine now and then; and he and Mr Roskell drank as good wine as did the Earl. Mr Gurgles did his duty thoroughly. His master, he took care, never had a bad bottle of wine at *his* table; and, indeed, never bought a bad bottle of wine—which is more than many a nobleman, or many a king, can say; nor did any one take away or waste a bottle. Mr Gurgles was severely honest, read the "Gospel Magazine"—which he called the "Gorspel Mag"—quoted it upon occasion, and tried to improve the morals of the servants below him.

The Earl's man, Mr Slates, was a good, quiet, solemn man, with no observation, no penetration, no smile nor laugh nor fun about him at all—one who did his work well, was always *at* his work; who was thoroughly absorbent of jokes, talk, or anything else. Whatever he heard never came out. He was, however, a capital man to listen; and, next to the Earl, he loved and admired—in the quiet manner that an orderly old cow or a walrus might love and admire—Mr Roskell.

We have said that he was absorbent: he was so, in more ways than one. Now and then, when he was left at home, and when the Earl went out, as he often did, attended only by Mr Roskell, or when he had asked permission to go to the theatre, Mr Slates would get quietly and thoroughly drunk; and then, with a headache, a pale face, and a languid gait, would go on with his work next morning as well as ever. Upon these occasions, Mr Gurgles would quote the "Gorspel Mag" to him, with the weight and authority of the Bible itself. Indeed, it must be said that Gurgles, who apparently read the Scriptures very seldom, usually quoted St Paul, or David, or St John himself, as the editor's own words.

"Now, my dear friend Slates," he would say, "why do you

o these things? The editor of the 'Gorspel Mag' says ex-ressly, 'Be sober, be temperate,' and he urges with great force hat 'strong drink is as a raging lion.'"

"'Twasn't at the Lion," said Slates. "They give you good tuff there. We had a little dinner of our society, and—in hort, it's the mixed stuff they give you."

"The 'Gorspel Mag' says," urged Gurgles, "that 'men are eceitful upon the scales,' and 'above measure.' And he says his with force, although I think he might have said below neasure; for they give you too little when they can."

Here Mr Checketts broke in with a song. Mr Checketts ad risen in life. He had been a groom; but being as good fellow as ever lived, and having risked his life to save Lord Vimpole's with as much *sang-froid* as he would have cleaned is boots, he had been considered worthy of promotion.

> "Born in a kitchen, in a garret bred,
> Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head"—

vas, as we know, a terrible offence in Lord Byron's eyes. Mr Checketts had not been born in a kitchen, for his father was respectable publican; and his mother's first floor, where Checketts first saw light, was as nice a bed-room as one might vell desire. But Checketts had been promoted; and he was ull of fun, good humour, slang, and poetry; so that he exer-ised the soul of Gurgles greatly. But, for all that, he was a reat favourite of all the inhabitants of the steward's room. Mr Roskell, Gurgles, and even the dull Slates, whose eyes vere as brilliant as those of a codfish, missed him when he vas absent. When Gurgles quoted the "Gorspel Mag" as aving accused men of being deceivers, Mr Checketts broke ut with the convivial and Shakespearean song-

> "'Men were deceivers ever;'
> They water your gin and they salts your beer,
> And they says, oh, aint it clever!"

Checketts had this peculiarity about him, that he recollected nly the first line of any quotation; and, having a good ear or rhyme, filled it up in his own fashion.

"Really, Mr Checketts, you must not show unbecoming evity. Mr Slates's little fault, which we will not mention"—

"'Oh no, we never mention him,'
I will not say a word;
A friend of mine got out last night,
As chirpy as a bird.

Well, you was chirpy, wasn't you, Mr Slates? I like to see you gettin' on that way now and then—not always. It brightens you up; it does, indeed. Well, you need not look so glum, Mr Gurgles."

"Mr Checketts," replied that venerable man, "the prophet, as the 'Gorspel Mag' remarks, going down to Jericho, met with a lion in his path"——

"'We met, 'twas in a crowd,'
And I thought he would shun me;
He bolted down a court,
And I knew that he'd done me.

Yes, he had indeed, Mr Gurgles"—all these gentlemen were very careful to put "Mr" before the surname of their fellows when they addressed them—"he had indeed. It was only half a crown, but I call it mean to rob a poor man of his browns."

Upon this, bursting out like a lark in full song, Checketts whistled an operatic air like an angel. He was a dab at whistling. He had acquired that accomplishment when collecting or polishing the paternal pots; and many a time had the artless young fellow enlivened the steward's room with his whistle.

The conversation was but a slow one between Slates and Gurgles; partly because Slates was a languid fellow at any time to talk to, and partly because Gurgles had very little to say which he had not urged before. The two men listened to Mr Checketts' whistle, and he gave them the "Bay of Biscay" in fine style. In the midst of the *da capo*, he broke out with—

"Why, them's my lord's boots outside. Dash my brass buttons! does that boy call them cleaned? Day and Martin is all hookey, if they won't polish no better. The cat as is looking into the back of a gentleman's Hessian boot, previous to shaving off his own whiskers, would fly at 'em. I'll give 'em a turn myself."

And away went Mr Checketts, to the surprise of the scandalised Gurgles, who, though he quoted the "Gorspel Mag,"

did not seem to have found in that excellent, and even then venerable, publication any text which bade him do his fellow-servants' work. As he remarked to Mr Slates—

"As the editor justly observed, a 'merry heart doeth good like a medicine.' Our young friend here is very impulsive; but he bemeans himself too much."

At this time Mr Slates was summoned by Lord Wimpole's bell, since he was good-natured enough to answer for his fellow-servant. He returned very soon. Paler than usual, his stolid reticence seemed to be melted out of him by fright. His fish-like eyes were wider open, his jaw had fallen.

"Why, good gracious, Mr Slates! what is the matter with you? Are you going to have a fit?"

Mr Slates sat down, wiped his forehead, and pointed upwards.

"Your master," said he to Checketts, who had returned, "is"——

"What, man?" cried the *ci-devant* groom. "Is he ill—is he in a fit?"

He dashed down the boots, and prepared to run up-stairs.

"Don't go!" cried the startled Slates. "It's of no use. I know them before where I lived. It's officers!"

He laid his hand upon the sleeve of Checketts.

"If it was the devil," said that young enthusiast, "I'd slip into him."

"Stop!" said Mr Roskell, very authoritatively. "Don't stir. This is some awful mistake, and the fellows will get into no end of a row. Are you sure of what you say, Slates? Who is it?"

"On'y Stevenson, that was of Bow Street. In the new uniform, but I know him. There the door opens. They are going to take him off, so help me Davy!"

Even Mr Roskell was no proof against this new and terrible news. Leading the van, he crept and creaked up-stairs, and heard the door close; and then, peering through the side windows at the hall door, they saw Lord Wimpole quietly ascend the hackney coach with the heraldic panels, followed first by Inspector Stevenson, and then by Mr Tom Forster.

"'Tis Stevenson. I know him before," said Checketts,

turning very red. "What has he to do with our house, d——"

"Don't," said Gurgles, putting his hand on the young man's mouth, and stopping the word cleverly. "'Be angry and sin not,' as the 'Gorspel Mag' says. At the same time, I'm free to own that you might knock me down with a feather."

"Is my lord awake?" asked Mr Roskell. "There's some horrid mistake here."

"He's not the man to make a mistake," said poor Checketts, as if he knew all about it. "That man Stevenson knows his business too well, I am afraid. My poor master, what has he been at? I'll lay my life he's innocent."

"That was the man," said Roskell—"the man with the boots and the curled hat—that I saw this morning prowling about this neighbourhood. What right has he about a house like this?"

There these men stood, in the hall, utterly dumbfounded, and knowing not what to do, when a rustling was heard, and the housekeeper stood before them. It was Mrs Preen, stiff and rustling in her silks—prim, pretty, and precise. She, even, who was never caught napping, was astonished at the different attitudes of grief and astonishment of the men.

"Gentlemen," said she, "pray tell me what is the matter."

Mrs Preen dropped her keys, and was really ready to drop herself.

"What! do you mean to say that the Earl of Chesterton"——

"No, 'tisn't him," said Checketts. "Wish it was, almost. He'd make it all right with the House of Lords. No, mum, they've been and nabbed my master."

"'Tis some matter of debt—a quarrel—probably a mistake," urged the housekeeper. "Does the Earl know of this?"

"No; and he's not to know just yet," returned Slates. "A sudden trouble has fallen upon us. But it is no use waiting here. Come down-stairs, and let us say nothing about this. Lord Wimpole evidently did not mean any one to know of it—at any rate, down below."

At this speech, Mr Gurgles went to console himself with his favourite magazine. Mr Roskell, like a man demented, betook

himself up-stairs to see that Lord Chesterton's dressing-room was in order ; and Checketts, rushing up-stairs, saw the door of the study and bedroom open, and looked round with dismay. There was the morning coat, there the cravat of his lordship. With an eye to everything, and knowing every article in the house, Checketts soon discovered that some strange hand had been at the drawers.

"There 's a pair of trousers gone, and a pair of boots, some gloves, and a cigar-tube his lordship smokes. I put it on that mantelshelf myself. Now, what is this? Let me think back."

Checketts did think back. What had Lord Wimpole been doing? He had been out several times very late, very late indeed. That was nothing unusual. If he had been like any other of the young fellows, fond of twisting off knockers ; if, like a certain Marquis, he had carried a prizefighter about with him for the express purpose of beating the New Police ; if he had delighted in painting the inn signs of a brilliant scarlet colour, and had taken pleasure in using his "bunch of fives," like Corinthian Tom and his elegant friends in the "Life in London"—Mr Checketts could have easily fathomed the matter. In that case, in fact, he would have been used to such little episodes in the life of a young nobleman. But, as Mr Roskell had said, Lord Wimpole was a pattern. He had been out late during the past three or four weeks ; and, contrary to all custom, Mr Checketts had not been with him.

"Let me think again," muttered the servant to himself. "Why, he was out precious late on the twenty-ninth as was—Michaelmas Day. I won a goose at a raffle, and sent it to grandmother ; and it turned out a rum 'un, I hear. If he wasn't in love now—

> 'She 's all my fancy painted her ;
> She 's lovely, she 's divine ! '

But what he is arrested for—well, I 'm blowed if I can guess ! I wonder what that lawyer called for, and what he has to do with it? He has something, I 'll swear. His father not to know just yet ! Well, 'just yet' has passed. He shall know, by jingo ! "

With this oath of mickle might on his lips, Mr Checketts jumped suddenly on his feet, like one who has taken a hasty resolution. He hurried to the door to open it; but a hand was on the outside. It opened inwards. Slowly and feebly it opened, and Lord Chesterton stood before him—not the erect, stalwart nobleman of yesterday, but an older man, with stooping shoulders and hesitating gait, his feet hastily thrust into his slippers, his dressing-gown pulled closely over his thin shoulders, his hair unkempt, his cheeks fallen and thin.

"Philip," he murmured, "I have sought you"——

"My lord," said Checketts, humbly, "I beg pardon. I have come to see whether my lord's room is all right."

"Well, Checketts, well; and his lordship, Lord Wimpole"—the Earl seemed to hesitate and search for a word—"is he well? Perhaps not so. Where is he?"

"Why, please your lordship, his word was given not to tell you. He is gone out."

"Gone! Where—when? You hesitate—you gasp, man! Are you afraid? What is it?"

"He's gone out with two—gentlemen," stammered Checketts. "Not the kind of gentlemen he usually knows—with two officers."

"Two officers!" gasped the miserable father. "What officers?"

Then, with a sad, silent stupor, he looked straight before him; and the words that his son said about trials that it was impossible to endure, came back to him. The room swam before him, and he caught hold of the arms of the chair to support himself.

"Great heavens!" he thought, "my dream has come true! My unhappy son is arrested, and for the murder of his own brother!"

Mr Checketts opened his eyes with even greater wonder as he saw the grand old nobleman, whom he thought as firm as a rock, or the Bank of England, fall quickly, but very gently, back in a swoon.

"By all that's good, I've been and killed the Earl," cried Checketts to himself, as he knelt, in a confused and helpless manner, at his master's feet, after nearly "pulling the bell out by the roots," as he afterwards described his action.

CHAPTER XXII.

VISITORS TO MR HORTON.

It followed, from this escapade of Mr Checketts, that Mrs Preen and Mr Roskell soon attended to Lord Chesterton; and that his lordship, under the feeling that his servants were gazing upon him in his grief, regained something of his composure, and, after the space of half an hour or so, walked out from Chesterton House almost as composed, at any rate to outward appearance, as when he entered on the previous evening with his son.

Notwithstanding the urgent request of Mr Roskell, the brave old gentleman would not have one of his carriages brought for him; but hiring a hackney coach, he was driven up to the police court, where he found Mr Horton, who had not long parted with his prisoner, and still sat debating with himself the question of Philip's guilt.

Lord Chesterton had left his house with a wavering idea of endeavouring to get his son restored to him; and with a confused but terrible certainty upon his mind that, in the horror of the discovery, Philip had either dyed his hands, or endeavoured to dye them, in the blood of his rival. For although the denizens of the servants' hall were very well up in the criminal proceedings of the day, and were as anxious as most persons to penetrate the Kensal-Green mystery, it had not occurred to them that Philip was, or could be, connected with so vulgar a crime. A terrific duel, a death in a gambling-house, the murder of a rival in the affections of some beautiful and enchanting young woman, such, rather, were their notions of a crime perpetrated by their young master; and, indeed, before knowing who the victim was, the partisans of Lord Wimpole were very willing to believe that the murderer, if he were a murderer, was in some manner justified. It is astonishing how lenient we are when we know the criminal. Why does the murdered party get in his way? we naturally inquire. And, indeed, this feeling spreads not only amongst the friends

of the murderer, but amongst the public; and, after a certain time, the victim is forgotten, and the crime condoned.

Whilst the servants at Chesterton House were still in ignorance of the cause of the arrest, and were allowing their imaginations to run riot upon various surmises, the Earl was shown into the private room of the magistrate, and received by that gentleman with the tenderest and most respectful regard.

Mr Horton had known Lord Chesterton as most middle-class gentlemen know noblemen—at a distance only. We are not allowed to approach to a near familiarity with those above us. We move in circles, we Englishmen; and forty years ago, these circles were more sharply defined than they are even now. Mr Horton, therefore, was more than respectful in his greeting, when he saw this old nobleman, or rather his shadow, move into his room, with his grief upon him like a burden, with his voice hesitating, and his proud, direct look lowered and abashed.

He rose at once, and motioned him to a chair.

"You can guess, Mr Horton," said his lordship, "why I call. An officer has arrested my"——

He would have said "son," but his voice faltered, and refused to say the word.

"You are unwell, my lord," said the magistrate. "Shall I summon any one—a medical man—to attend to you?"

"No," said his lordship, quietly, yet very decisively. "I have merely an old attack. I am not so young as I was, and these little things touch me."

Little things! There was something of the old patrician pride in this.

"And, besides," said his lordship, "we cannot conceal from each other—we, who are men—that this humiliation is, indeed, dreadful. Where is my son? Can I see him?"

"It would not be well at present," returned Mr Horton, pouring out a glass of water. "Everything goes well. There is only a little mystery which must be cleared up, my lord."

Here Mr Horton spoke as cheerfully as he could, very much against his own conviction.

"In this murder, my lord, there are certain circumstances which press heavily against your son."

"Unhappy boy!" said Lord Chesterton, looking back, no doubt, for years upon the image which his mind formed of his Philip, when he was but a boy, and when he was once the curled darling of his father's heart. "I am afraid it is too true! Horrible as it is, it is but natural. He has fought with him, and killed him."

He uttered these words aloud; but they were addressed more to himself than to Mr Horton. Then he seemed to recover himself, and said—

"But I assure you, sir, that Lord Wimpole had great and immense provocation."

"Provocation, my lord?" ejaculated the magistrate with astonishment. "He could have had none. This unfortunate"——

"Pardon me, sir," returned Lord Chesterton. "I know something of this; indeed, I am the more guilty of the two."

This confession, which astonished the magistrate not a little, seemed to take a weight off Lord Chesterton's mind. He lifted up his head, and sat erect upon his chair.

Mr George Horton looked at him. "Well!" he thought to himself, in the short pause that occurred, "here is another mystery. Old Daylight will have to be set to work again; and here, again, I may find him a clue."

"Yes," continued the nobleman, more freely, "I am the more guilty of the two. I prepared the train which has exploded, and will bury my house in the ruins."

George Horton, one of his Majesty's stipendiary magistrates for the county of Middlesex, was utterly amazed, and thought, very properly, that his best way was to keep silence. He imagined that misfortune had turned Lord Chesterton's brain, and that he had better let him talk on until a lucid interval occurred.

"As I am not at present accused of any participation in this crime," said the Earl, "I may tell you, sir, as a gentleman of the law in whom I have the utmost confidence, some of my unhappy history."

Misfortune makes old gentlemen garrulous. How willing they are to talk of their ailments; how glad they are, when lowered in their pride and helpless in their trouble, to tell of their sorrows! So thought Mr Horton.

He sat still in his chair, in a good-natured, pitying way, ready to let the nobleman, whose pride had been so cruelly wounded, tell his tale.

"You must indeed pity me, sir," said Lord Chesterton, in answer to the looks of the magistrate. "I can quite understand the courteous sorrow which you express in your looks. Consider, sir, the heir to the house of Chesterton accused of murder; and, it may be"—here the Earl looked round, and spoke in a low tone, as if no one should hear him—"it may be, tried at the Old Bailey, like any common felon, and condemned. It cannot be allowed to be, sir. You must help me."

"My lord, it is impossible," said Mr Horton. "I have really personal reasons why I should rejoice if this young gentleman were innocent; but it is not in my province."

"It is in your province," said the Earl, eagerly, "to feel like a gentleman, and to feel with a gentleman. I only want you to help me with your knowledge of the law. This—what shall we call it?—this homicide cannot have been a murder: it must have been a duel."

"A duel?" asked Mr Horton, in astonishment. "Is your lordship aware that the victim was a woman?"

"Thank God!" cried the Earl, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid—for I will conceal nothing from you—that one of my sons had stained his hands with the blood of the other. Now, however, there is hope. Philip cannot have been guilty of this crime. Who, pray, is the unhappy person?"

"Estelle Martin. Your lordship may have seen the"——

But Lord Chesterton did not give Horton time to finish the sentence.

"Estelle Martin!" cried he. "Why, she was a servant of the family—a pensioner of mine, whom I brought from Normandy. Why should Philip murder her? He has visited her with me."

Some hope began to dawn in the father's breast of the innocence of his son; but it was soon to be extinguished. Mr Horton begged him to be composed; and, in a dry, calm way—as calm, indeed, as he well could be—he told him the story. Lord Chesterton read the debates in the House, or now and then he might read the leading articles in the vigorous *Morn-*

ing Chronicle, or its rising and powerful rival, the *Times;* or, indeed, he might have amused himself with the sparkling vigour of that young giant of literature, the *New Times*, which met with so early a death; but he left the criminal records to the *canaille*. He had not read the report of a murder since his college days, in the last century.

Not having been enlightened by the lucubrations of Mr Barnett Slammers—to whom a good murder, especially if a mystery, was a small silver mine, and who started a new theory concerning it every evening—the old nobleman listened with eagerness. As he listened, his hopes in his son's innocence fell. Old Daylight's chain of evidence was so strong that Lord Chesterton, in spite of his love for Philip, was almost as strongly convinced as Daylight himself.

When Mr Horton had concluded, Lord Chesterton remained silent for a long time. Then, speaking as if he were partly talking to himself, and partly to a clergyman in a strange shrift, he said—

"You must know, sir, that although the person of the victim is different, the crime is the same, and the cause is the same. All the antecedents I laid down. How unhappy is man, that there is no step that he can take but that will lead him, either ultimately or proximately, into desperate guilt!"

"Not so, my lord," said Mr Horton, quietly; "a man's fate is in his own hands. If he chooses to push away crime, he can. It is but a wild doctrine which declares that if a man is tempted he must fall."

"He generally does so," murmured the old man. "He is surrounded with things that are dire to him. The circumstances of the Greek tragedies occur again. It is we who are Orestes struggling against the Fates! When I was some ten years younger than my dear son now is, I was dominated by a father who assumed a power over me to which he had no right. He was, I can now see, a smaller man, spiritually as well as physically, than I. He was as lithe, gliding, compact, and well-finished as a small serpent; and as a serpent all men dreaded him. He had a pale, clear face, like marble, which flushed, but gently only, on the cheek bones and side of the eye, when he was excited or annoyed. He never showed more

anger than this, and did and said little; but what he did was calculated to wound dreadfully. Sharp words darted suddenly from him, as the tongue darts and plays from the slimy lips of a snake; and they were as poisonous to the sensitive and the young. I dreaded this father of mine; and, though I was much taller, stronger, and, indeed, more clever, my spirit bent before his. He ordered me to marry for the sake of the estates. He conveyed to me, somehow, the feeling that we were merely part and parcel of some feudal system that required certain duties of us, whereof the propagation of the name and race of the Chesterton family was the prime duty. He made me hate myself and my race, my fate, and my country, by his bitter sayings. After my career at college, where I won readily a degree—which otherwise my rank would, in those days, have easily assured me as honorary—I went on a tour to France and Germany. In Paris, I met with one of the sweetest, noblest, and most beautiful women I ever saw. I was delighted with my freedom, and only too happy to be away from my father. I fell in love with Eugenie, and she with me. We were delirious with passion and love; and I regarded not the difference of our rank any more than the late Lord Stanhope would have done, who wished his daughter to marry his footman. Eugenie, only too ready to comply with my wishes, for she loved me—at least, I thought she did—fondly and devotedly, followed me to Germany, where, in deference to my rank, and out of fear of my father, we were united by a Morganatic marriage. No sooner was I married to Eugenie than I was summoned home; and fearing—dreading, indeed—my father, I was forced to marry the Countess. Pity me, sir," said the Earl, stretching forth his hands; "the ceremony was indeed vain, the marriage a wicked mockery. I was weak and wicked; but now I am punished indeed!"

"Spare yourself the narrative," said Mr Horton. "I know something of this."

But the Earl went on.

"The Countess and Eugenie became mothers almost at the same time; and I loved the one—and, indeed, despised the other. Then it was that I conceived the notion of doing justice—not, indeed, to the mother, but to the child of my

first marriage. With some hesitation, I broached the subject to Eugenie; but I had mistaken her. For months I had to struggle before I could overcome her repugnance to my plan.

"At length she yielded. By the aid of a valet—who is since dead—the children were brought together and suddenly changed. They were not unlike each other; and the Countess who was ill at the time of a low fever—saw her child so little, and apparently cared so little for it, that she never suspected my plan. All succeeded for years; until at last, when all seem sleeping quietly, when the grass is green over the grave of the faithful valet, and the Countess rests in her mausoleum, as cold and as contented as she was when alive, a sudden explosion blows the fabric to the air, and I am left stunned, wounded, and naked, hoist by my own petard—my beloved son a murderer—myself a plotter, a forger, a conspirator against my own flesh and blood. O Mr Horton! Mr Horton! I have despised the truth, and the truth has slain me. I have not thought of God, and suddenly He has struck me. How true is that text—which I remember now—'Be sure your secret sin shall find you out.' But, alas!" he continued, "I was punished, even in my sin. I was told—nay, I was assured—that Eugenie, upon whose love and purity I would have staked my life, was untrue to me. I believed it, and I made her unhappy for life: we never saw each other again. Oh! sir. Do you know what that means? Separated from her whom you love! Why, you may as well die! You live on; but how do you live? I tell you, old as I am—I swear it, even now—there is nothing worth living for but love!"

The old man tossed his arms wildly over his head, and sobbed outright. The world had thought him so happy, so calm, so cold, in his subdued sorrow. Here, indeed, was a revelation to the magistrate; and to *him*—to him who felt the weight and truth of every word. There was nothing worth living for but love!

Both of these men—one old, the other of mature age—were for a time silent, wrapped in sad thoughts, victims to the passion that they and the world daily affected to despise—did, perhaps, despise in every case but their own. Mr Horton was thinking of his prisoner, and of her who loved him; the Earl

was living in the past—when, in sunny France, he was so happy, so filled with love; and then his thoughts would wander to his unhappy Philip—when a knock, loud and official, followed by a heavy step upon the boarded floor, announced the presence of a police sergeant. The door opened, an official cough preceded a half-military salute, and the words—

"Please, your worship, a young lady—she will take no denial. Here's a card."

The gentleman in blue offered a stiff piece of pasteboard, as thick and as large as a playing-card, upon which were engraved, in a fine, free, small hand, the names—

The Countess of Sark.

Miss Winifred Vaughan.

Park Lane.

But the name of the Countess had been drawn through by a trembling hand. The magistrate's hand shook as he read the words on the card.

"Will you excuse me, my lord, if I request you to withdraw for a moment into this inner room? This visitor demands privacy."

Lord Chesterton, docile as a gentleman, and even more docile now, withdrew; and Winifred Vaughan stood before her lover.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"WHAT, SHALL I NOT DEFEND HIM? WHO BUT I?"

WINIFRED VAUGHAN was, under ordinary circumstances, one of the mildest young ladies that could be met with in a day's march.

That was, however, no reason why she should not be very fierce upon extraordinary occasions; and this was one. She walked into the office with all her wrongs upon her heart. Her lover had been arrested—and, of course, wrongly arrested. What woman could ever doubt that? Winifred wore, therefore, a determined, brave look as she entered the magistrate's room; and her bright eyes did not convey to him any gracious or friendly recognition. Like all women in love, she reasoned rather from her heart than her mind, and she did not wholly acquit the magistrate in this matter of the arrest. In some way—how, she did not pause to ask herself—she believed that Mr Horton should at once have freed the innocent. The intricacies of the law, the network it spreads around any one who is caught in its meshes, she would have had entirely broken. Of what use was a magistrate unless he could at once decide between the guilty and the innocent?

Mr Horton's eyes fell before her direct and angry gaze. When a man has been once in love with a woman, there is assumed between them a tacit bond that is never broken. The terrible accusation against Lord Wimpole was unknown to Winifred, but his note had told her that he was arrested for some very serious crime; and directly it had been delivered she had come to Mr Horton, as her friend, to ask his aid. By some means—perhaps by a persuasive eloquence, not unknown to beauty—she had learnt from Inspector Stevenson that Lord Wimpole was not only at the Marylebone police court, but that he was detained by Mr Horton's will. Hence Winifred walked somewhat angrily up to the perturbed police magistrate, and said, abruptly—

"You know, sir, why I am here. I am come to—to—" here she hesitated a little—"to appeal to you at once to release him."

George Horton looked at her aghast.

"My dear young lady," he said, after a pause, "pray sit down; we can talk together about this matter. There is a great deal to be said."

"No," she said, resolutely standing before his desk; "there can be but little to be said. I will not sit down. There is some terrible mistake here. Of what use are the law and its

professors, with their learning and their studies, unless it and they can render justice?"

She stood looking at him, flushed a little, more charming than ever, more resolute than soft. Her girlishness had disappeared, and she seemed to have grown suddenly into a beautiful woman, strong in her love, her purity and truth.

Well might he pause—well might he pity her. His love for her had never diminished—say, rather, that it had increased tenfold from his non-success. He was a true man, she was a true woman. How could he break the news to her? Could he tell her that, within a few feet of her, the proud father of the man she loved sat broken down and disgraced at the guilt of his son—guilt that was borne in to him, as it would be to all, by the evidence which Old Daylight had prepared, and which Lord Wimpole did not deny?

His silence irritated Winifred. She tapped the floor with her little foot, and flushed from pale to red as she looked at the magistrate. "And this man," she thought to herself, "said he loved me; and yet he keeps me on tenter-hooks."

"Why do you not speak?" she said. "Lord Wimpole is here, in this dreadful place; perhaps shut up in prison. Let me go to him, let me speak to him. He will tell me the truth."

"The truth, Winifred Vaughan!" returned the magistrate, bitterly. "Would I withhold the truth from you for one moment, if I thought it could give you comfort? You call him Lord Wimpole—him whom you love, and whom you told me I should love and honour. Do you know what misfortune has fallen upon him, and upon his house? Do you know—can you bear to know—that the man whom you rejected, and who speaks to you now, will be more honoured in the world than he will be whom you preferred? If you can, then I can tell you more."

Fire flashed from Winifred's eyes as she heard this speech, which was certainly not uttered without a little bitterness on the part of the magistrate. Partly, this was owing to jealousy—which is, after all, a mean passion, although it is indulged in by noble natures. Partly, again, it was owing to Mr Horton's ignorance of woman's nature. He thought he would

break the news to her little by little. He was a very coward—as many good men are—when a woman cried, swooned, or fainted; and he was very much troubled by the thought that Winifred might faint, or fall down in a fit.

The young lady did no such thing. She looked at her interlocutor with great scorn, and walked once or twice up and down the room; then, turning and facing Mr Horton with a quiet smile, she uttered the words—

"Go on, sir. I can listen quite calmly to what you say. Soon, perhaps, you will condescend to speak about my immediate business."

"Your business!" he said. "Good God! is not this your business? Do you not want to know who he is to whom you propose to trust your future?"

"*I* know who he is," she said, calmly. "He is the most noble of mankind. Had you been struck down by misfortune, he would have been the first to shield you and to help you."

"But, Winifred," pleaded the magistrate—"pray pardon me, Miss Vaughan—this young gentleman has suddenly discovered circumstances which place him in a totally different position; he is not what he thought he was; he is"——

"He is my Philip still," said the girl, looking upwards with a fond devotion. "Whatever happens, whatever calumny may be invented, he is *himself*."

This young lady had arrived at that chief morsel of wisdom which so many men and women miss throughout life, that which sounds so like a platitude and a truism, and yet which so few know, that a man or woman can only be him or herself, whatever rank or fortune may shower upon them.

The tone in which Miss Vaughan declared that she loved Philip solely for himself, carried conviction to the unhappy magistrate's heart, just of a sort that he did not want. To do him justice, had not Winifred come to him, he would never have sought her. He was one of those men who took "No" for an answer, and quickly went his way; and as long as the temptation was out of sight, was quite content to try and forget it. But here before him, more beautiful than ever, showing love and devotion for another—this temptation was far too strong for him. He started from his chair, and paced the room.

"Miss Vaughan," said he, and then he stopped.

"Go on," she said, quietly. "You were about to speak."

Her interruption galled and confused him. Why, he asked himself, should he not tell her all? Why should she hate him if she heard the truth from his lips?

"I was about to tell you something that must pain you, but which you must sooner or later hear. Although it will give you pain, I will not be coward enough to shrink from the task."

Winifred was silent. Burning as she was with a desire to see Philip released, she listened calmly. She began to find that it is the province of law to speak and to instruct, and not to act immediately.

"If you will allow me to sit down," she said, with a calm and cool contempt, for her anger was great against this man, "I will listen to you."

She took the chair vacated by Lord Chesterton, and prepared, with a calm demeanour and cast-down eyes, to listen.

"O Miss Vaughan!" said Horton, "if you now could see my heart, you would pity me. What shall I say to you? How shall I begin?"

"You know best," she said. "What is this mystery? You will speak; and, in the meantime, I suffer, because Lord Wimpole suffers."

"Lord Wimpole!" he said, with half a sneer, which was natural but ungenerous.

"Yes," she said again. "It is he who is chiefly concerned. It does not matter for you or for me. No wild or wrong accusation lies upon us.

"O Miss Vaughan!" said Horton, "I must tell you, and tell you at once. At the base of this accusation, the cause of this crime, lies the fact which will startle you. Lord Wimpole is not what he pretends"——

"He pretends!" said Winifred, starting to her feet, "he pretends, Mr Horton! Dare you use such language to me?"

"You will force me to speak then, madam. Philip Stanfield is not Lord Wimpole; he is not his father's legitimate son."

As he said this dreadful thing, Mr Horton approached the young lady—who had risen to her feet in the energy of her

indignation—thinking that she would fall to the ground. But to his surprise she said little, and did not stir. Her face was flushed, her hands clenched on the back of the chair. Then, after a pause, she said, quietly—

"I know that this is asserted. There have been some papers found, possibly forged. It may be true. What does it matter to me?"

"You know it, then!" cried the magistrate, with astonishment.

"I have known it for several days, sir."

"And who told you?"

"Who should tell me but Philip himself? Dear Philip!—his first action, when he found this out, was to come to me. That was the action of a true man."

This was spiteful, because it insinuated that Mr Horton's actions were not those of a true man; and, poor fellow, he who was playing the losing game had the greatest difficulty in knowing how to play it. His next move showed it.

"And," said he, looking with unconcealed admiration at Winifred—"and you love him still?"

"Love him still," she said, quietly.

Horton turned on his heel when he saw the pretty, flushed, triumphant face. The look went to his heart. His old jealousy blazed up. He could have been guilty of any meanness, if he could have found an answer sharp enough.

He envied the man who was accused of murder, and who was sitting—quietly and resignedly enough, poor fellow—in one of the police cells across the yard. Horton would have gladly changed places with his prisoner, and his pale face told something of his story.

Winifred saw this, and pursued her triumph. He had willingly said bitter things against her Philip. He had put his heart in her hands, and had dared to tell her that he loved her; and this was the way he showed it.

Quietly rising, therefore, she faced him, and said, with a calm irony—

"Oh, you clever men! Mr Horton, how little you know of us women, to whom you, some of you, believe your are so superior. Love him—love my Philip now! why, I love him

ten times more. Do you think that I loved him for his rank, his coronet, his riches, or his place? No, Mr Horton—I love him for himself. These accidents of birth prevented the free growth of my love. Now, I can love him with *all* my heart. Now he is stripped and fallen, he has risen *here*."

She placed her hand upon her heart as she spoke this, leaning back, with one hand upon the chair—as if that pure, soft heart was a shield she placed before the object of her love.

The magistrate, staring at her, was smitten again with desperate jealousy and an intense love.

"You will have it, then; you will have the truth of your hero—your perfect knight, '*sans peur et sans reproche?*'"

"My perfect knight," she said softly, a smile parting her full lips, as if it made her happy to repeat the words. "My perfect knight—my Philip!"

"Your Philip!" said the magistrate, fiercely. "Your Philip, my poor young lady, is accused of *Murder!*"

The blow struck. Winifred sank down in her chair, looking up, amazed.

"This lie," she said at last, slowly and deliberately, "is too dreadful. Whom has he murdered? Whom could he? Did he hate even to strike any one—not even his rival, even you, who can repeat these scandals?"

"His victim was a woman," cried the magistrate, suddenly and with malice. "And, from what I can see, the evidence is sadly against him."

When a woman is in any case, any other woman becomes suspicious. Winifred was troubled, and said, tremulously—

"Mr Horton, upon your honour as a gentleman, upon your credit as a magistrate, are you telling me the truth?"

"Upon my *soul*, Miss Vaughan, I am. I have struggled with myself—how much, how terribly, I cannot tell you. I did not issue the warrant until I was forced by evidence to do so. Let alone all other considerations, Winifred, believe me that I did so to spare you."

"Go on," said Winifred, no longer fierce and triumphant, for the tone of Mr Horton carried conviction even to her. "Go on. I will bear all. Who was this woman?"

"Estelle Martin—a Frenchwoman."

Winifred grew pale. The name was pretty. She had not heard it before; for the outline of the story Philip had given her did not necessarily include any reference to this woman; and jealousy and suspicion, born of the devil, began to act upon her.

Could it be that Philip was really guilty? Had he destroyed his victim from love of her? Terrible doubts! Winifred had heard from that astute dowager, Lady Sark, quite enough of men's doings to render her suspicious of the whole sex; and does any woman really trust them? We need not ask whether they have any reason to do so; but surely they might be generous. If we add to the general want of truth in man an equally general distrust of her own sex, which sadly prevails with woman, we may, perhaps, excuse Winifred if she trembled in sad doubt of "her Philip, her knight," as she listened to the weighty words and certain tones of Mr Horton.

Her heart sank, indeed, within her as he told her all. She was relieved when she heard that Estelle Martin was no rival, but an old nurse; but the chain of the inductive philosopher was too strong, and her belief almost began to waver as Horton, evidently with a generous desire to spare her, weighed but lightly upon each piece of evidence. Had he not done so, she would have been less convinced. She loved Philip none the less; but her faith wavered a little—too much, indeed, for her strong love.

When the evidence was concluded, Mr Horton began to relate the story of the interview between Lord Wimpole and himself; and then, to his astonishment, Winifred began to revive, and her colour came again.

"You see," concluded the puzzled Mr Horton, as he looked upon her whom he loved so well, "he will not tell me where he was on that night."

"Then," said Winifred, "I will tell you: he was with *me!*"

Horton started to his feet.

"With you, Miss Vaughan?" he said with amazement.

"Yes!" she said, calmly. "He came on purpose to tell me all that Mr Edgar Wade had told him; and he spent the time with me, from six in the evening until nearly midnight. Dear Philip!" cried the girl, the mists of doubt beginning to clear

away, "did I dare to doubt him? Oh! my love, my love! I will ask his pardon on my bended knees. My own true knight, indeed!"

"Can you tell me this, Winifred?" cried Mr Horton; for if love gave her a right over him, it gave him, too, some right over her. "Can you publish your own?"——

"Shame!" she said; "you are dreaming. There is no shame for me or for Philip. Come, lead me quickly to him. Release him; there is no evidence against him. He was with me. I will swear it!"

"Alas!" cried George Horton, beside himself, "you save him by condemning yourself. This is not true. You could not"——

"Could not! Why, I am Philip's *wife!*"

"Great God!" said Horton. "Have you other witnesses to your meeting?"

"None! not one. Why should we have?"

"Alas! then, he is lost. If he be your husband, your oath is negatived. You may speak the truth; but the law refuses the evidence, either for or against."

Winifred heard this, and heard no more. Horton's words carried conviction to her, and it was like a death warrant. With a plaintive cry, like that of some weak and sorely wounded animal, Winifred fell fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"*HERE IN HIS CHAMBERS SAT THE MAN OF LAW.*"

HIDDEN amongst a mass of buildings, from which the smoke beats down upon the foggy November days, and upon the roofs of which the sun sheds rays which seem to get more hot and wearied from having to pierce through so much fog and dust, is the little fountain which throws up its sparkling sprays in Garden Court, Temple.

How the dry old benchers, spinning their dusty webs in the musty, old, cruel days of Eldon and Scarlett—when, as Sydney Smith said, every possible iniquity was perpetrated in the

name of the law without one lawyer of eminence, except the "gigantic Brougham," ever dreaming that anything was wrong —how these old benchers consented to allow so fresh and so pure a thing as a fountain of water to be near, it is quite impossible for us to say. Their Philistine old heads were occupied in making law as distasteful as it could be, so far as in them lay; in poring over deeds which were only full of deadly traps for future clients; in trying to expound marriage settlements which no poor bride could ever understand; and in dreaming at odd times of the awful troubles they brought upon their own flesh and blood—if a decoction of parchment and pale ink can be so called—by making their own wills. For it is an axiom laid down by a learned Lord Chancellor—himself a wondrously proficient legal authority—that no barrister or adept—even if he be as wise as Solomon and as learned as the learned Selden—can make his own will! Wise solicitors, over the walnuts and the wine which they have obtained by the money of their clients, shake their heads, and chuckle over this mystery; and clerks who are picking up "Noy's Maxims," and serving their articles, quote this as one of the profound mysteries and most cherished beauties of the law. But it is not until a man has been thoroughly *uneducated* of every good and honest principle that he sees the whole beauty of this admirable system. Sometimes a student finds that his conscientiousness is too much for him, grows melancholy, and foregoes the honour of becoming Lord Chancellor; but usually he gets accustomed to his work, and accepts the stale consolation that, if clients were not so selfish, lawyers would not be so bad.

Sometimes—and this was the case with Mr Edgar Wade—he allows himself to be persuaded that law is very beautiful in theory, and that there really is no wrong without a remedy. After such a conclusion, he looks upon the writhings of the victims of delay, false judgments, errors, and cunning contrivances, as an ignorant impatience on the part of the clients. He makes up his mind that what he has to do is simply the best he can, for himself first, and his client afterwards; and he "gets on." But, after all, the education the law affords is not beneficial to the conscience. We have had barristers who have offered up an oath that their client was innocent; when it may

justly be inferred that they knew he was guilty, and merely shut their eyes to the fact. When these gentlemen, after a number of years spent in defending criminals, have themselves sat on the bench, we have seen them "deeply affected," and betraying "visible emotion," even to shedding tears, when they were forced to condemn a criminal. This must be taken as a proof that the law does not always harden the legal heart—indeed, the proof is not necessary—there are always a number of gentlemen at the bar, admirable for their tenderness and Christian virtues ; but they are not, as a rule, successful barristers—they employ their time as critics, and their merciful behaviour and great leniency to novelists and rising authors is too well known and appreciated to be more than referred to in passing.

Edgar Wade was successful as a barrister ; for, although he had not "hugged an attorney," he had attracted the notice of the head of a busy firm of solicitors, and did not want for briefs. His chambers on the first floor were reached by a dirty old staircase—all the dirtier then than now, since sweetness and light were matters little recked of in the chambers of the law. The principal room was occupied by the barrister ; a dusty and ill-ventilated bedroom, seldom used, lay beyond it ; and before it—boarded off from it by old painted panels, cracked, yellow, and worn—was a slip of a chamber, occupied by his clerk, a man of two and twenty, who looked like a dried-up boy of eighteen—whiskerless, shabby, and badly provided as to shirt collar and complexion, both being equally yellow. This old young gentleman occupied his time chiefly in catching flies and taking in the names of visitors—written by himself, in a legal hand, and on slips of blue paper, neatly cut to size for the purpose. Like all barristers' clerks, he had a great belief in the talent of his master, and looked forward to the time when business should increase so much that he, the clerk, Mr John Scorem, should make some hundreds a-year in clerks' fees, and be able to purchase a little freehold at Peckham or Clapham, with an apple tree, or various apple trees, in the garden. For Mr Scorem was already a clever pomologist, if we may coin such a word ; and knew a ribstone, a stone apple, a cat's head, or a Kerry pippin at a distance. He always had an apple in

his pocket, bulging out like a cannon ball, ready to be furtively produced and munched. He smelt of apples like a fruiterer's shop; and sometimes, passing through "the Garden," as he fondly called Covent Garden Market, on his way to the office from Knightsbridge, he would purchase a whole bushel, and store them in the wooden cupboards which some former proprietor of the chambers had fitted up with a tolerable liberality, until they ripened, with a greasy consistence on their coats, which Mr Scorem fondly polished off with his pocket handkerchief. The aroma from this delicious fruit was strongly objected to by Mr Edgar Wade, and was referred to by his clerk as "mysterious," as if it were the scent of some dead bencher.

"It is curious," the guilty Mr Scorem would say, with his pocket nearly bursting with a yellow cat's head. "I often wonder, sir, what it can be. I generally get a whiff of it as I come in fresh of a mornin'."

Then he would open the windows; and as the scent strictly and conscientiously confined itself to the clerk's room, Mr Wade did not trouble himself about it, and passed in to his own sanctum, leaving Mr Scorem to digest the huge lump of apple he had hastily swallowed.

Mr Scorem's greatest pride was to see his master properly "robed," and to dream of the time when he should exchange a stuff gown for the silk. His second was to preside at the Cogers' Hall, or some such august assembly, and there to lead a debate upon the law. He was a Church and State man, hated the Radicals, treated Lord John Russell and Sir Francis Burdett *de haut en bas*, and spoke with the dignity of a peer of the realm, and the weight of a city councillor. In those days they debated great matters, and the minds of the Cogers were exercised by the question whether it was the duty of a reformed Parliament to abolish the House of Lords, and to depose the sovereign. And to Mr Scorem it was deputed to tear this supposition to rags, and to cast it to the four winds. Scorem —we beg pardon, Mr Scorem; so he was always termed, with scrupulous politeness, by his master—had risen to the height of the occasion, and had determined to call the eloquent Brougham a "tongue-gifted traitor," and Lord John Russell

"a viper, battening to fatness on the ruins of an ancient Church," in his speech that evening. So far had rancour spread—for the debate on Reform had been carried on in our slow-thinking land for many years; and, while the victory of the Reformers was not far off, the feelings of the opponents of Reform had become more and more intense.

"Yes," said Mr Scorem, jotting down the choice epithets, "the Russells still live at Woburn Abbey. I think I have fitted the cap there. Hallo! Come in."

As the person did not come in, Mr Scorem gathered up the few sheets of blue wove scribbling paper, pocketed a half-eaten apple, and opened the door.

Mr Checketts, out of breath, and somewhat confused, stood outside the door.

"Does Mr Edgar Wade live here?"

The barrister's clerk, with his mouth partially engaged with an apple, tapped with a roller on the name of his master duly painted up on the door.

"Ah! yes," said Checketts, confusedly. "Can I see him?"

"He is engaged with a lady."

"I want to see him particular and immediate," urged Checketts, regardless of adverbs.

"What name, sir?" asked Mr Scorem, taking out a slip of blue paper.

"Checketts. Say I come from the Earl of Chesterton."

The name was one of might to the conservative and aristocratic Scorem. He took a fresh piece of paper, and wrote, "—— Checketts, Esq., from the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterton." Then begging the messenger to be seated in his apple-scented office, he apologised for the delay; and gave Checketts shortly to understand that Mr Wade's time was very precious indeed, and in some mysterious manner hinted that he was about to do the Earl a personal favour in daring to break in upon his master's privacy. Then, with an important knock, he gave notice of his approach; and entering in a business-like way, as if he had not a moment to spare, he marched up to his master's desk, and laid the paper upon it.

"Stay a moment, Mr Scorem," said Edgar Wade.

For the faithful clerk, with his eyes fixed upon the ground,

had again reached the door, as if his life depended on his finishing his business—say of copying out a most important brief, in which Mr Wade was coupled as leading junior with the Solicitor-General.

"What is this messenger?"

"A kind of a gentleman, sir. Wants to see you, he says, 'immediate and particular.'"

The lady arose at this. She was admirably dressed, as to neatness and selection of colour—evidently a French lady; indeed, no other than the companion of Mdlle. Natalie Fifine.

"I shall be disengaged in one moment. Pray sit down, madame. Tell the gentleman I will see him shortly."

Mr Checketts heard the words, and repressed his impatience. Perhaps time never appears longer than when one is waiting at the office of a lawyer, or in the anteroom of a fashionable doctor. Checketts' state was not to be envied. His love for Lord Wimpole was rude and rough possibly, but very great. His belief in the power of the great house he served—which had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength—had been put to a severe test. The entrance of the police into Chesterton House was to him a perfectly revolutionary proceeding; and the faithful Cléry, valet to Louis the Sixteenth, could not have been more rudely shocked by the entry of the rough *canaille* of Paris into the King's chamber than was Checketts. For the servants and underlings of great people feel their position even more than the great ones themselves; and the loyal Checketts had an *esprit de corps* in regard to his "family," as warm as any soldier in the most crack regiment of his Majesty's army. Down in the steward's room, the movements of "our family" were debated in a kind of unprinted "Court Circular," of which Mr Roskell was the chief editor.

While Checketts fidgeted, and Mr Scorem, admiring the coolness of his master, went on writing out his speech with an air and business manner that fully persuaded his companion that he was drawing out an important brief, Mr Wade coolly finished his discourse.

He had on his table a beautiful bouquet of autumnal roses and other flowers, which scented the dull room; and as he

softly talked, the plash of the little fountain, which spouted upwards from a single three-quarter-inch pipe, in a most inartistic and artless manner, could be heard at intervals; drowned sometimes by the hurry of steps in the paved court below, or borne away from them by a gust of wind. It was not an unpleasant room for a student. Books duly bound in law-calf lined one side of it; a table, covered with briefs, was on the other; and a fire burnt cheerfully in the high-cheeked, tall old grate, which reached half up the chimney, and came down between its broad hobs like the letter V.

Outside, in the waiting-room, poor Checketts, fretting himself for his master, experienced some slight foretaste of the law's delay. He, too, could hear the fountain, the regular rise and fall of Mr Wade's soft and sonorous voice, the racing of Mr Scorem's pen upon his blue-lined brief paper, and the hurry of the feet below. A quarter of an hour seemed an age to him—to him whose master's name had hitherto been a passport for immediate attention.

At length Edgar Wade stopped short, and drew to an end. All Mdlle. Fifine desired was, that he should take some tickets for her night. The young lady, who afterwards created so great a sensation, was not then of importance enough to have a benefit for herself; and was—after the manner of our friends the actors and actresses of to-day—anxious to get the house packed with her partizans. And although Mr Wade, in his blind passion, had been perfectly prodigal of the presents he had made her, Fifine—with the genius the ladies of her class and nation have for saving money—looked as sharply after the shillings as she did after the fifty-pound notes. The elephant, in the simile which has been used a few times before this, is said to be able to pick up a pin and to rend an oak. Fifine had the same wide range in picking up money: she would stoop for a farthing, and scramble for a sovereign; and the same quality may have been observed in all who love money for the money's sake. And, after all, was Fifine to be blamed? She expatriated herself from beautiful France, from her blue skies, from her gay—and, at that time, somewhat redolent—city; and took up her temporary residence amongst us cold islanders, for the purpose of making money. Why should an

actress be less active, wary, and capable of attending to her business than a merchant, a grocer, or any other man who devotes himself to the one purpose? Why should we publish laudatory notices of the industry and money-making capacity of a merchant or a tallow-chandler, and not praise the same qualities in the little merchant of *roulades* and *glissades*, who sold her glances, smiles, wiles, dances, activity, and high and low notes, for as much money as she could get?

"You will tell Mademoiselle, then, that I will be sure to be there. I have the two stall tickets, and I am provided with a bouquet. Here is the money."

Edgar Wade packed the sovereigns in a neat envelope of his own making, and handed it to the *dame de compagnie*, who was kept purposely by Fifine to play propriety, and to be as a watchful dragon over those golden charms of hers.

"Be sure to come!" Edgar Wade's infatuation was so great, that he would have gone to Nova Zembla for her. Men of mature age, who have never loved before, love strongly indeed; and young ladies of very tender years universally show a wise and prescient intelligence in preferring the love of a man of thirty, or thereabouts, to a boy's love. Fifine was herself a female philosopher in these matters, and had quite a *tendresse* for somewhat advanced admirers.

"They were," she said, "so generous. Boys, as a rule, were so selfish."

As the lady prepared, with the most polite courtesy, to depart, Mr Wade, who had risen, said, with what the French call *empressement*—

"You will be sure and tell Mdlle. Natalie that, in coming to her benefit, I am paying her a compliment I would not pay any other artist in the world."

The lady bowed.

"And I may tell you," continued the barrister, "that my mother, Mrs Wade"—here he passed his hands over his weary, sunken eyes—"is, and has been now for some time, very ill, and that properly I should be with her during the night at least, since business detains me during the day; but, nevertheless, assure Nathalie that I will not fail. I shall be sure to be there, to cast these flowers at her feet."

"Cast these flowers at her feet!" Yes, those were the words that Mr Checketts heard from the opening door as the veiled lady passed out. The faithful valet was in a half-dreamy state from having had so long to wait, from the room redolent of apples, the monotonous plash of the fountain, and the half-awakened, slow, dull atmosphere of law which had fallen for some hundreds of years upon the Temple and its buildings—an atmosphere which lies like a thick fog upon our venerable laws and ever-to-be-venerated law-makers.

"Cast flowers at her feet!" murmured Scorem, as he noted down the phrase to be used before the assembled Cogers, or Lumber Troopers, as a pretty figure in connection with the Majesty of Britannia, the Queen of the Seas, and the Leader of Order and Civilisation.

"Casting flowers at her feet!" thought Checketts, in his dreamy state. "Why, he is talking poetry and play-making, not law. And my dear master in prison, and the old Earl in a fit, and old Gurgles—God bless him!—beside himself, and swearin', quite forgettin' the 'Gorspel Mag.' Half of us mad, and this cool fellow talking like that. Dash it! there 's always a woman at the bottom of it."

The door shut, and a little bell was heard to ring.

"Now, —— Checketts, Esquire," said Scorem, jumping off his stool and into his business way always kept for clients—"it 's your turn next, sir! Pray walk in, sir!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"*MY DEAR GOOD MASTER, I WOULD PLEAD HIS CAUSE.*"

Mr Checketts entered Edgar's room, still eagerly bent upon his master's business, but somewhat toned down by waiting and reflecting in the outer office; for even the chambers of counsel learned in the law have that effect upon the uncultured laity who approach the temples of Themis, as, heretofore, the strongholds of the priesthood of the Eleusinian mysteries had upon the strangers who came near them.

Mr Checketts' ideas concerning law were few, and were not

very clear. He had friends, in a lower walk of life, who had got into scrapes with constables and with police; and his father, being "in the public line," as he phrased it, had had to appear before the magistrates who looked to the important measure of licensing public-houses.

In the opinion of Mr Checketts, senior, the whole system of law and of licence, which, to his view, were one, was a system of fraud. In those happy days, if a man were on easy terms with a justice of the peace, or could get a gentleman of position to say a good word for him, the matter was soon settled. A few questions, a pleasant good morning, a caution not to allow drunkenness, nor to harbour loose and suspicious characters, and you went away with your licence in your pocket, particularly if you fee'd the constables.

"Them you must fee," said old Checketts, "and you were all right, whether there was one public in the neighbourhood, or they were as close as beehives in an aviary."

The good man meant an apiary; but it was all the same. It was plain that he had no belief in the justice of the law. And how many of the lower class then had? It was a dangerous time; and it always will be a dangerous time, when people are not convinced of the necessity and the strict justice of law and lawgivers. Bold spirits were abroad who clamoured for reform; and, with many, reform meant revolution.

Happily the trading class had found this out; and gave the nation the proper pause, wherein England almost always adjusts herself. There were other men, like our friend Mr Scorem, who were really the salt of the nation—poor and content, ready to wait, and positively eager to see good in things evil. If the Court and the aristocracy did not do their duty, but were wholly given to vain expense and pleasure, these worthy people were ready to argue—"Well, if you had money, would you not spend it as you liked?" Or, "Spend-money is good for trade; if everybody was a miser, where would the poor be?" If they were beaten in that argument, they would simply tell their opponents to mind their own business, and let the rich mind theirs.

But about this matter of law, the minds of the poor were pretty much of the same opinion. Thev did not look upon

the law as the poor man's friend. They used its name as a threat of strong terror. "I'll have the law of you," was a terrifying saying, which sent many a poor man into fits. Poor debtors starved at Whitecross Street; and rich debtors played at rackets in the Fleet, by the side of poor debtors who were starving. Rich young men, noblemen, gentlemen—or their imitators, rich tradesmen—sallied out of a night, bent upon what Old Daylight called "Tom and Jerrying;" and were let off with a friendly caution, after making the magistrates laugh. While poor mechanics, who, after working hard, went out for a "spree," were fined and punished severely, and had a scolding sermon administered to them from the bench.

As for justice, that was hardly so much a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, in the opinion of —— Checketts, Esquire, junior, as a plain toss-up. Robert Peel's Act was going to put things right; and the New Police, whose appearance in the streets created quite a commotion, and who were followed about at first, at an admiring distance, by the boys, were hailed by no means as a force equally purposed to defend both the rich and the poor, but rather as a sort of domestic dragoons, to keep the poor down. When, therefore, Mr Checketts found these dragoons had invaded Chesterton House, he was utterly perplexed.

He gave a curious look round at Edgar's apartment, noticing the fine bouquet of flowers on the table, and thought that they were somewhat foreign to a lawyer's office—for barristers or solicitors were all one to him; and, indeed, to most of his class—and then sat down at the edge of the chair which Mr Wade pointed out, with very much of the feeling that a plain countryman of the old time might have experienced when he came to consult an astrologer.

"I see you are from the Earl of Chesterton," said Edgar Wade, who—never forgetting a face, even if he had only once seen it—at once recognised Checketts. "Pray, what does he want with me?"

Mr Checketts, who had come purposely to ask Edgar's aid, was at once nonplussed. There are some persons who object to anything like a direct question. Mr Checketts was not one

of those; but he had come upon a roving commission of his own, and he hardly knew how to explain himself.

"Please, sir," he stammered out at last, "I found your card on Lord Wimpole's mantelshelf. I believe you called on him the other day?"

"I did. What then? Does he want to see me, or is it his father?"

"Both of them, sir, I think," replied Mr Checketts, uneasily.

"Both of them—why?"

"Well, sir, I don't know my lord's secrets, and"——

"Then you are very much unlike other servants," said Edgar, drily, and, as Checketts thought, somewhat rudely. "You are, I suppose, Lord Wimpole's servant?"

"Yes, sir," said Checketts; "his own man, sir—out of livery. I have served him nearly ten years—first as a groom; and a better, kinder master does not tread this earth. Not tread this earth, sir," said the faithful Checketts, repeating his words, to give emphasis to his assertion.

"That may be. I can well believe it. It does you both credit to hear you say so. But that is not to our purpose. Come to the point, man, and don't stare about in so dazed a way! Have you never seen a bouquet of flowers before?"

"Yes, sir—many."

"Well, then, have you not a message to deliver? If so, deliver it. My time is precious. Have you no letter?"

"No, sir. I came on my own account."

"Just now you said you came both from the Earl and from Lord Wimpole. What can be the matter with you?"

As he said this, severely enough, Edgar Wade moved the flowers from his writing-table; and put them, less in view of Checketts, on one of his side desks.

"Now, then," he added, "I suppose you have got into some mess; and, with the confusion of people of your class, you fancy that a barrister and a solicitor are one and the same. If so, I can't help you. I might give you some advice, if you could find your tongue."

"No, sir—no, indeed!" cried Checketts, earnestly. "I don't come for myself. I keep out of lawyers' ways as long as I can."

"And a very wise thing too. Mind you always do so," said Edgar, with a grim smile.

It was the first time he had smiled. He was weary, pale, and worn, as if he had studied overmuch; but, when he smiled, Checketts was somehow struck with a wild fancy that the barrister was very like both the Earl and Lord Wimpole.

"They would never make no money not by me, sir," said Checketts openly. "But, somehow or other, we must all come to them, whether we like it or no!"

"Many a wiser head than yours has found that out, my poor fellow," returned the barrister, with a sigh.

The tone opened Checketts' heart. Before that, Edgar Wade had seemed to him like a stone—and a very unpleasant, cold stone, too. Now he could speak.

"Oh, sir," he cried, "you are a gentleman as knows the world, and has some feelin', too. You are quite right, sir. Many a wiser and a greater man than me, or than you, sir, finds it out, as you say. My poor master, sir!"

Here the amiable Checketts paused to keep down his grief.

Edgar Wade, with his back to the fire, warming his legal check trousers, looked upon the man with wonder.

"Do these people," thought he, "command the love of their servants? Egad, they are well placed."

But he, wisely, did not interrupt Checketts.

"My poor master," continued Checketts, more calmly, but speaking very quickly, "were arrested last night—leastways, I make a mistake, this very mornin'—by a Bow Street runner, and a New Policeman, sir; and the old Earl has fallen down in a fit; and we are all at sixes and sevens—that 's what 's the matter!"

"Arrested!" said Edgar Wade. "For debt, I suppose?"

He was very pale, but very calm; and he turned round to poke his fire as he said it.

"Oh no, sir—not for debt! 'Tisn't the sort of officers as does that. It 's something very serous—very serous!"

"They should apply to their own solicitors, not to me. I must be instructed by those gentlemen. I suppose you know that!"

Mr Checketts did not know that, and looked blankly out of the window ; getting up from his chair to make another appeal.

"You see, sir, it must be something serous ; for the Earl—as come up from Brighton yesterday—dined with his son last night."

Edgar Wade pricked up his ears, as Mr Checketts would have remarked, at these words, and asked—

"Did you wait on them, then ?"

"No, sir, it isn't my place ; but I saw that my lord's room was all right ; and after dinner they went there ; and, it seems, they had a very long and serous conversation."

To which you listened—you, or some of you, I suppose," said Edgar Wade, harshly.

"No, sir. We don't do such things—at our house, at least. Servants have feelings of honour, sir, sometimes," said Checketts, plaintively.

"Umph !" was the gruff rejoinder. "That's what you are supposed to do in novels and in plays."

"Novels and plays ain't always real life, though some of them come very near to it," was Checketts' dignified answer. "Besides, if Mr Roskell caught one of us lingering near the doors of the chambers, he"—meaning the servant, not Mr Roskell—"would not be long in the house."

"Then how do you know the conversation was long and serious."

Edgar Wade knew, perhaps, better than any one except the two interlocutors what that talk was about ; but he had a habit—a barristerial habit—of cross-questioning, and he wanted to ascertain as much as he could from other sources beside the chief one.

"Well, sir," said the servant, "you see they did not retire till late ; and when Mr Roskell—who is a very old servant, and quite friendly, as one may say, with Lord Chesterton—that's the Earl—when he went to his chamber, to see that all was right—for he is the last in bed, and about the first up—the Earl was deeply affected, and very, very silent."

Here Mr Checketts paused, as if reflecting.

"As for my lord," he added, "*he* was terribly dull, as he has been since you called, sir."

Here Checketts looked furtively at the barrister.

"Since I called? Then you think I have something to do with this mystery?"

"There are mysteries in great families, and lawyers somehow worm them out," said the plain-spoken servant. "And you see, sir, we put two and two together in our rank of life. Of course, it 's very low of us, and we are often very wrong; but we do."

"Since you are so observant, and so familiar with his lordship—Lord Wimple," said Edgar Wade, with emphasis—"may I ask whether he said anything to you about this mystery?"

"Not a word, sir. Usually, he is full of cheerfulness—as blithe as a lark; but he was very dull; told me he would not want me, called for some brandy and water, lit a cigar, and smoked half the night, I fancy."

"Thinking over the mystery?" asked the barrister.

"May be, sir," said Checketts. "That 's what I put it down to. I found three ends of cigars—and he seldom or ever smokes more than one—and the brandy were half used."

"You servants are observant. You make use of your eyes."

"What are eyes for, sir?" said Checketts. "Generally, masters don't speak much to us; though mine was never of *that* sort, God bless him! He was as kind, as free, and as open as the day. It was always a pleasure to be with him; and I, for one, was never tired of serving him. He never took no liberties like, and always bore himself as a gentleman; but if there were a good-natured word to be said, or a joke to be made, his tongue was the first to speak it. Service wasn't service with *him*."

"You speak as if it were a thing of the past," said Edgar, noting the reverie into which Checketts had fallen.

"Many a long day have I had with the hounds with him—many the cropper have I seen him get; but when he was up, it was always the hoss as he looked after first. Many a tiring trapes, till we were both pretty nigh dead-beat, have I had with him over the moors, shootin'; and he 'd lighten my shoulder of the guns, and never lose his temper with the sport, bad as it might be. He 'd be cheery and pleasant as we neared

home; and his first thoughts was about *my* legs—if they were tired—not his own."

Mr Checketts here put his knuckles into his eyes, one after another, solemnly enough, and smoothed his hair down in groom-like fashion; as if, in recalling those past days, his past occupation came back to him.

"He was a kind master, then?" asked Edgar, patiently enough, as if studying the man.

"Kind! He just was. It was not d—— you there, and d—— you here, as it is with some of our young bloods, I can tell you, sir. And the old man is as good as the young un. Beg pardon, sir—I mean the Earl. They are true noblemen, sir—true gentlemen, too; for there's many a nobleman isn't a gentleman. And what this misfortun' has fallen on our house for," said the puzzled Checketts, fairly out of patience as he wound up, "I'm d——d if I can see. I beg pardon, sir, I am sure."

"But are you certain it is so serious?" asked Edgar, again. "You may be mistaken, you know. You seem an impulsive sort of a man."

Checketts shook his head.

"I know the ropes pritty well, sir," he said; "and I know town well, too; and I know that a New Policeman and a Bow Street runner come upon criminal business, and that they don't generally make no mistakes."

"And why do you come to me, then?"

"Because I saw your card on my lord's mantelshelf; because, begging your pardon, your visit first brought a change and a trouble on the young lord; and because the old Earl, when he came out of his fit, muttered the name of 'Edgar Wade,' 'Edgar Wade,' twice, as if it was in a dream."

"Why did you not say that at first, man?" said Mr Wade, fiercely. "Had I known that, I should, of course, have at once said that I'd come."

"Well, sir," returned Checketts, humbly, "there ain't much time lost. His lordship has gone out somewheres."

"So he sends for me at last!" muttered Edgar to himself. "At last, my turn has come!"

"Don't mention about my callin', sir," said Checketts, pre-

paring to depart, and moving near the door and nearer the window.

"Of course not. Be assured, I will lose no time. You are a good fellow. Here 's a crown for you."

Checketts respectfully refused.

"No, sir," said he, simply; "we don't do *that* in our house. Besides, barristers, they say, is a poor lot; though may be powerful some day."

Edgar smiled at the man's ingenuousness and good-nature, and opened the door for him. The door was near the window, which commanded the view of the court below, and Checketts looked out thereat. As he did so, he caught hold of Edgar's arm.

"There," said he, "there he is—that 's the Bow Street officer as arrested my lord! He is coming this way."

Edgar Wade glanced into the court, and saw Mr Tom Forster!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I PRAY YOU, PLEAD FOR ME—UPHOLD MY CAUSE."

WHEN Edgar looked out of his chamber window, and saw old Tom Forster walking briskly past—for that good gentleman had mistaken the house—and heard the exclamation of Mr Checketts, "That 's the Bow Street officer as arrested my lord!" he, for the moment, imagined he was dreaming.

He had looked upon the old fellow as in many ways a shrewd, in others a somewhat doddering, old man, who loved, as most retired tradesmen do love or pretend that they love, to potter about upon business, or what he called business; but that he was an adept at tracing crime, and connected with a police office, Edgar had never guessed.

"He 's looking for this house, I 'm sure," said Mr Checketts; "and so *I 'll* clear out at once."

This was just what Edgar Wade desired; so he, promising to call as soon as he could, shut the door upon Checketts, and sat down.

That gentleman, putting his handkerchief to his face so as not to be recognised, made his escape down-stairs before Old Daylight found that he had passed the door upon the lintel of which was the honoured name of Edgar Wade.

Presently, however, the tread—stable, steady, and quick—of the old gentleman was heard on the stairs; and Mr Scorem opened the door to a modest double knock, which seemed as if it desired to remain single, but could not succeed. This modest double—a single with a little addendum—is often given by tradesmen who are rising in the world; who, having begun to be gentlemen, have hardly ceased to remember their connection with trade.

"Mr Edgar Wade within?" asked the owner of the Hessian boots, the spencer, and the curled hat.

"Yes," replied Scorem, who had dashed down from his stool, and had thrown into his face an amount of work and worry most creditable to his master. "Yes; and he's disengaged now, I think."

"I think" was thrown in by Scorem in such an artistic way that the most cunning of visitors would have been deceived. "I think," as if Scorem was so bewildered by the number of clients that, although he was the Cerberus of the chambers, he could not exactly answer for the presence of any of the numerous callers. At the same time, Scorem threw one of his arms and half of his face towards the speech he was writing, as if it were a brief from which he was torn by the intrusion; and that thousands of pounds, or, which was dearer, the honour of ancient families, depended upon his getting back to it as soon as he could. This artistic yet polite impatience impressed Old Daylight very much. He was prepared to be impressed by anything pertaining to Edgar Wade. He loved that "young fellow," as he called him; and love sweetens every morsel, however bitter it may be, and lightens up every dark corner. Moreover, Edgar Wade was not bitter: he was noble, impulsive, generous to a fault. So said Tom Forster; and who should know better than he?

"Really, I won't keep him a moment. I have something important to say to him."

"Oh, very well, sir," said Scorem, in a resigned sort of

way—(as much as to say, "Now, look here; you are going to intrude on the future Chief Baron, so don't bother *him*")—"oh, very well. *I* don't know how he can get through all this. Please, what name?"

"Tom Forster, if *you* please."

"Thomas Forster, Esquire," muttered Scorem, as he wrote down the words in a most approved engrossing hand.

"No—Tom Forster. I was christened Tom. *Mr* Tom Forster."

The vile custom of esquiring everybody had then set in, but not in all its fury; and Old Daylight, who was precise in his manner, and who knew the difference between an esquire and a plain gentleman, withstood it as long as he could.

"Very good, sir," said Scorem, rapidly dashing down the name. "Wait here a minute."

And with the respectful knock, intensified in its respect if possible—a humble, inquiring knock, as if it felt itself to be intrusive, and did not want to be knocked at all—Scorem brushed his hair from his perturbed brow, and dashed over the space between the door and his master's table as if his life depended upon his sedate and business-like quickness.

He had closed the door behind him, so as to allow no jealous peep into his master's sanctum. Barristers' clerks have that method; being obliged sometimes to withhold from a profane public that it is not a consultation, but an oyster luncheon, that the future Chief Justices are so seriously discussing. Meanwhile, the client is troubling his head about his cause; and the learned gentleman is wiping his brow with a wet towel, and hiding a pint of stout in his wig box.

Simple Mr Forster, seeing the zeal of Scorem, pulled out one series of fingers, so as to make them crack, to mark his satisfaction.

"'Like master, like man,'" he said. "What wisdom there is in those good old proverbs. Now, that is just the studious young fellow I should have chosen for Mr Wade's clerk. None of your second-hand copies of Corinthian Tom."

Herein Old Daylight was quite right. Mr Scorem's vanity did not lie in imitating those wild dandies of the day, as we have seen; but it is doubtful whether his behaviour at the Cogers' Hall would not have astonished his admirer.

Edgar Wade, leaning thoughtfully on his arm, as if he were resting from previous study, lifted up his dark, lustrous, yet wearied eyes; took the card, read it, and questioned, by a look only, the faithful Scorem.

"Nice old gent, sir," said Scorem; "rather of the downy sort. Might be a country solicitor, only too well got up, sir."

The influx of visitors had so far perturbed Scorem, that he waxed familiar with his master—a habit which zealously faithful servants have who look after your interest, and who know they do so. They may be a nuisance, no doubt, to doubly refined people; but the comfort to these is, that no one need be afraid of these servants. If they are intimate, they are seldom dishonest. Your rogue, on the contrary, is tremendous in his respect: he would not take a liberty for the world; and yet he robs you.

"I know him," said his master. "He is my landlord. Let him come in."

Scorem's face fell at once. The great case he was always dreaming of, "With you, Sir Boreham Foggs," and five hundred guineas, had not yet come. Its corresponding clerk's fee was also absent.

"Oh—h!" ejaculated the clerk.

But, true to the traditions of his office, he called up an important look, dashed back to his little den, and threw open the door in an abstracted way, as much as to say, "There you are—*go* in; and let me get back to that important brief."

Old Daylight, who had never had the honour before this of visiting the barrister's rooms, cast a deferential look round the sanctum. He had a veneration for law calf; he loved the buff backs and the red labels that ornamented Edgar's bookshelves; and he sat down, with a due regard to the majesty of the law.

The light from the window shone full on the barrister's face; and Mr Forster was shocked to see how pale and worn it was. Habitually observant, he took in everything at a glance. There was the old mezzotint of Lord Mansfield in its ebony frame, looking the *beau ideal* of ancient Faith, Integrity, and Justice—in short, of English law, as properly carried out. There

also, was the new portrait, in the mixed style—for stipple had come in, and had invaded the realms of the good old mezzotint—of Harry Brougham; his face clean, angular, sharp as a carved wooden head on a walking stick; the flesh done with minute stipple spots, and his robes made rich by the rocking tool, after the way of cheap engravings. Behind the door hung the barrister's robe, somewhat dusty and old; near it was his wig box; while a goodly display of briefs—the accumulations of some years, it must be confessed—littered the table.

"How do you do, Mr Forster?" asked the barrister, wearedly. "I am glad to see you here; but I am rather surprised."

"I thought you would be so, my dear sir; but it was my duty to come. I have some most astonishing news to tell you. But do not be surprised too much. I hope, you know, that right will be right very soon, and that the 'King shall enjoy his own again.'"

"I am sure I've no objection, Mr Forster. What king?"

"Why, you are as bad as Ancient Pistol, in Shakespeare, who cries out, 'Under which king, Bezonian? Speak or die!' What king? What but the true Lord Wimpole?"

"Oh!" said Edgar, with a start—as if he had only just thought upon that matter, and the subject was unpleasant to him. Then he rose, and, pushing back his cane chair, said—

"I am not very glad you have come to speak about that, Mr Forster. Do you know that I am almost sorry that we have entered on that pursuit? Why not let the matter rest? God has willed that, for some mysterious purpose, evil should triumph. Why should we struggle against this? Why not submit?"

"Why not?" said Old Forster, wonderingly. "Why not? If this were to be the opinion of all the world, wrong would live crowned and triumphant, and right would be pushed out of record into—into"—here Forster found no suitable place; so he lamely concluded with—"into the coal-cellar."

"So it is—too often," said the man of law.

"Umph! then it shan't be in this case," added Old Daylight, testily. "No; if the world had not in it some persons with a strong will, and a backbone to their purpose, we should all be at sixes and sevens."

"Then you, for one, do not agree with the sacred injunction, 'If a man take thy coat, give him thy cloak also?'"

Old Daylight rose, and walked up and down the room before he answered.

"What could Edgar Wade be driving at?" he thought. The Temple seemed to have entertained an angel unawares. Here was one altogether too good for this work-a-day world. Was it goodness in reality, or a mere fictitious and ideal goodness?

Forster had long watched this young gentleman—had known him to do kindly deeds, and to utter noble sentiments; but when it comes to claiming anything which is one's own, or to foregoing an undoubted right—then, indeed, we find few saints in this world. Old Forster never pretended to so exalted a character. His was a straightforward life, spent in simple, unideal duty; and he never rose much above it, while he certainly never sank below it.

"I agree," said the old gentleman, "with the beauty of that sacred lesson; but I humbly think that, in this mixed world—wherein we have bred a race of professional rogues, and men are wicked, not by sudden starts and occasional temptations, but as a matter of trade—it would be as well not to try that extreme charity. Perhaps the injunction was not meant for us work-a-day Christians, but for the blessed apostles only. They had nothing to gain in this world. Submission might make them avoid many evils; struggling against unjust persecution could only heap more on them. But this does not touch us. You must claim your own."

"But think, Mr Forster, think of the pain it will give to my father—to my poor, guiltless brother!"

"Poor, guiltless! I am not so sure of that. What did your father do for you? He has his privileges as a father; but he has his duties as well. Why should the stiff, proud aristocrat push away an innocent babe, and to substitute another in its place? Right is right, either amongst angels or devils—amongst great gentry or us poor folk; and if there is anything that I especially hate, it is successful wrong."

"But it is so many years since!" again urged the barrister, dreamily and wearily. "Let it go by—let it pass."

"So many years ago!—that's it; that's just it," cried the elder speaker. "As if continuance in a folly or a crime could make it right!—as if a thistle, or a weed, or a poison tree—like the upas which travellers tell us of—was less a thistle, or a weed, or a tree of poison, because it was a huge thing, of long growth, and deeply rooted. Thank God for one thing," concluded the old man, wiping his forehead with his red bandana—"evil does not triumph long. I have lived to see that nothing that is not true and good can exist. Gadzooks! It was worth while to live in 1815, I can tell you, if only for that. The Corsican tyrant, who broke his heart by growing too fat when at rest, was caught then by our stout English Duke—caught and beaten; and he, whose bloody ambition had caused so many battles, was sent to St Helena, to linger out a disappointed life, until his own"——

"But don't you pity him?" asked Edgar. "Do you not pity the beaten and unsuccessful hero? Alone! with the barren rock to look upon; and the bare, melancholy ocean crawling in glittering wavelets at his feet in the long days of hot sunshine, or bursting into storm and foam in the winter. Cannot you pity such a man, when he feels that his life's work is undone?"

"Pity him?" asked Old Forster. "Pity him! What for? Am I to pity an unsuccessful burglar, who, trying to enter and rob a house, gets thrown out of window, and breaks his ribs? Well, you young fellows astonish me! I can pity the good and the honest; but I am—" here Old Forster blew his nose with his red bandana, like a war trumpet—"if I can pity a beaten rogue. But, to my business. It is of a surprising nature. This morning"——

"You arrested my half-brother, Lord Wimpole," said Edgar, coolly.

Old Forster jumped, as if he had been pricked with a bayonet.

"How do you know that?"

"Perhaps I divined it. I also know that Lord Chesterton wishes to see me," added the barrister, enjoying the old gentleman's confusion. "And I also know that Mr Forster is not unknown at Bow Street; where, I believe, he is considered a very efficient aid to his Majesty's police."

Old Daylight was covered with confusion. He had intended confessing the nature of his occupation to Edgar, because he knew that he would soon discover it; but he was, of course, unaware of the revelation made by Checketts, or his visit.

He shuffled one Hessian boot forward, and then another—plucked at the leathern tassels—turned very red; and then, putting the bandana to his mouth, looked straight into the bright, keen eyes of Edgar Wade, who was watching him.

"Well," he said, "after all, it was my fancy. I will be for moving now. A barrister, and a great man like you will be, cannot be long a friend with such as I am. I know that; and yet I'm sorry. I knew it would come to this, and that it would come soon. But I don't like it any the more because you have had it from other lips. I dare say that the fellow who told you spoke something nasty about me. Called me an old thief-taker, I suppose. Well, I am that; but, look you, I'd rather be a thief-taker than a thief-maker. I don't think much of the world; and it returns the compliment by not thinking much of me. But, Mr Edgar, I should like to stand well in your eyes; and, if you cut me—as you must—I shall still have the honour of bringing you to your right."

"My dear, good old friend," returned the barrister, "I think none the worse of you for your craze—let me call it; in fact, I believe it to be a very useful one to society; and, if a nation honours a soldier, I don't know why we should not honour the guardians of our domestic peace."

"He speaks like a leader in a newspaper," thought Old Daylight; "perhaps he even writes them. I am sure he's clever enough—who knows?"

Then he said aloud, as he rose and grasped the open hand of the barrister—

"Say no more, Mr Wade—say no more. You do me too much honour."

"I was going to say," said Edgar, "that not only shall I not cut you—recollect that I am in your debt, too, if you please—but I shall be proud to know"——

"You're too good, too good," babbled the old gentleman, amazingly flattered. "Now, let's to business. Ah, I see"—

here Old Daylight glanced at the mantelshelf—"a hothouse bouquet for your sick mother. Good fellow, good fellow!"

"'Pon my word, Mr Forster"——

"Now, let me speak. This young Lord Wimpole is about as knowing and as cool a card as ever you set your eyes on. I watched him like a lynx. He did not flinch a bit: never showed the white feather."

"Noble fellow! He is a true scion of a staunch old house. *Noblesse oblige.*"

"Lord bless you!" said Old Forster, "if *noblesse obleeges*, as you say, we are all *noblesse*—we English. I've seen a common gutter thief show as much pluck as a thorough nobleman ever did—as Lord Ferrers himself, although he was tucked up in a silken halter. Now, look here, Mr Edgar. Mark me! This cool young lord—we will call him lord—wants to see you."

"I know he does."

"Oh, you do, do you? He's been before me, has he? Well, you won't catch a weasel asleep twice. Well, he wants you to defend him. What do you think of that?"

Edgar looked fixedly at him; but didn't say a word.

"Cool, is it not?—as a cucumber, as they say. Now, mark me. Don't you have anything to do with it."

"Can I refuse him, Mr Forster?" said Edgar. "He is my brother. *I would defend him with my life!*"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE COMMON TALK OF GOSSIPS WHEN THEY MEET."

"'DESTRUCTION cometh suddenly upon you, even as a thief in the night,' according to the editor," said the butler.

These words fell upon the ear of Checketts as he entered the steward's room. The conversation was apropos of the Chesterton family, of which Mrs Preen was relating some legend. A female Chesterton, in years gone by, had committed a dreadful crime; and, being suddenly convicted of it, had turned cochineal colour.

There is always some black sheep in every flock; and this black sheep had the dangerous talent of appearing, according to Mrs Preen, as white as a dove, until found out. Was it not natural to expect that, in this instance which they, the servants, were then debating, Lord Wimpole might have been that black sheep? So Mrs Preen argued. The tide was turning in the servants' debating assembly. Mrs Preen's father had been a law stationer, and she had grown up with immense veneration for the law. It was not likely that that august machine could be wrongly guided, or could make a mistake.

"People in office," said Mrs Preen, sententiously, "seldom make mistakes. Bless you, they know everything. Look how wise the judges look! It is beautiful to see them; and then, how beautifully they speak!"

Mrs Preen had been to one or two trials—to which we know ladies are fond of flocking—and had been greatly edified by the way in which some learned judge had comported himself.

"They look a great deal wiser than they are, mum," said the irreverent Checketts. "Bless you, they often make mistakes! I recollect my guv'nor was persuaded to give a poor old stable-keeper, who was down our mews, into custody for stealing pots. One of 'em—he had had a pint o' beer, Meux's Entire—was found in the 'oss's stalls, and the poor man was convicted, and sent across the seas, or something like. Well, after all, another man confessed to the job; and the poor ostler was as innocent as a chick just hatched. And then they granted that poor old man a free pardon! Pardon for what? For being innocently convicted! Do you call that wisdom? Preciously wise all the big-wigs look; but it 's the horsehair that makes them look so!"

"Well, now and then, Mr Checketts, the wisest man must err," said Mrs Preen, smoothing her silk apron.

"'The wisest men are but babes,' as the editor says," interposed Mr Gurgles. "But I am apt to think Mrs Preen is not far wrong."

"Besides," added the housekeeper, "this is not a case of pot stealing."

"No—the family has not fallen so low as that," said Gurgles, with dignity. "I am afraid, young man, that your early educa-

tion has somewhat interfered with your notion of things. As the editor remarks somewhere, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' That is wisdom, Mrs Preen—is it not?"

"Well, I don't quite know that," retorted Mrs Preen. "Here's our young lord—what better training can you want? First at Eton—all with sons of the most exalted families; then at Oxford; and now—oh! is it not dreadful!"

"There are some very wild doings at Oxford, Mrs Preen. I have been down there to visit my brother, who is a porter at one of the colleges. Bless you, don't they have rows! 'Some young fellows,' says the editor, 'are like Ishmael, and some like Jacob. The human heart,' he adds, 'is desperately wicked.'"

"I tell you what—desperately wicked or not—the people who arrested Lord Wimpole have made a mistake; and won't they catch it! My lord is as innocent as a babe unborn. I'd lay my life on it—I'd swear it!"

"'Swear not at all,'" quoted Gurgles.

"Won't I, though!" said Checketts. "It's enough to make any one swear, to find such a lot of half-hearted coves about one. I'd die before I believed him guilty. But you'll see—you'll see, I tell you. He's going to set one of those lawyers at him—at least, the old lord is—and a wonderful fellow he is. He ain't very old, as the little boy said of the puppy as was born yesterday; but he may have a lot of experience; and I hope he has. He looks like it. Eyes that can look you through; and such a forehead, and such lots of books!"

"That's your man," said Gurgles. "No wonder he looks pale. My friend and guide says, mum, that 'of making books there is no end, and much study is weariness to the bones.' That's why lawyers, and poets, and such like, are so thin. But I am glad to hear he's learned. Learning is better than house and land."

"Oh, bother, is it? Yes, I suppose it is, when you ain't got neither."

"I have much hopes of the man of law whom Mr Checketts speaks of. What is his name, if you please, Mr Checketts?" asked Gurgles.

"Mr Wade—Mr Edgar Wade; and do you know, mum,

that he was, somehow or other, in the look of him—whether it was his eyes, his nose, or his chin, or all three together—very like our old governor, and our young one too."

"Umph! that may be; and yet"—here Mrs Preen turned a meaning look upon the excellent Gurgles, and spoke with intention—"there can be no harm in that. I believe that his lordship was a most exemplary young man before marriage; and he married early."

"'It is a wise child,' observes the editor," said Gurgles, "'that knows his own father;' but, certainly, Wade is not the name of the solicitors of the family."

"No," added Mrs Preen; "Steppem, Tracy, and Filch is the respectable firm—most respectable firm—of Lincoln's Inn; and excellent solicitors they are. Bless you! I've been inside their offices, Mr Gurgles; and do you know, there is not one of their tin boxes that had not the name of a lord, or a lord's estate, upon it, or, let us say, such words as 'Exors. of the Honble. Miss Patchford;' 'Marriage deeds of the Duchess of Slowgoe;' 'The Potiron Estates;' and such words! What a thing it must be to be an Exor! Those are the gentlemen who stand to guard the King—all gold, and with drawn swords—or is it an Exon, Mr Gurgles?"

"I don't know, mum—I'm not used to anything palatial, although I had an uncle who was very stately, and very obese. He was kept to drive the state coach, and never exercised his whip upon any horses worse than the eight cream-coloured beauties belonging to his Majesty, that have the great privilege of wearing red morocco harness, and of never doing any work."

Here Checketts laughed, irreverently.

"Consequently," said Gurgles, finishing his sentence before he commenced his reproof, "I don't know much of Exons, nor of Exors. Pray, what are you laughing at, Mr Checketts?"

"Because I was thinking what precious fools them 'osses must think us men for keeping them in idleness, and letting them do no work—

> 'For Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do.'

There's a piece of verse that would suit your editor. But, Mrs Preen—ain't you old enough to know, mum, that this job

requires a barrister? and Mr Edgar Wade is a barrister, and much above any beggarly firm of solicitors as ever cheated a poor widow or robbed a distressed orphan."

Checketts thus threw a ball of fire into Mrs Preen's powder magazine. In early days, when vanity held sway over this excellent—and then maiden—lady, she used to say that her father was an eminent legal gentleman. Then, the bit of brag increased, and it became an eminent attorney; and then a solicitor. Hence, anything said against the legal profession generally, and attorneys in particular, was felt by Mrs Preen as a personal insult. Nor, indeed, was the lady very much pleased with Mr Checketts' exordium, "You are old enough." How often these little sentences—dropped unconsciously, it may be, by the speakers—annoy and worry us; nay, determine the bias of our own feelings against a speaker.

"Really, sir," said Mrs Preen, with the dignity of a duchess, "I am not aware that I have given you any cause thus to insult my family."

"Beg pardon, Mrs Preen," said Checketts, good-naturedly; "I did not mean it."

"Besides," continued the housekeeper—loftily overlooking Checketts and his apology—"besides, I am sure that solicitors are required in such cases. Do you remember that little affair of Mr César Negretti? You have cause to remember."

"Oh, don't I, just!" returned Checketts.

Well he might remember, indeed; when to that circumstance, amongst others, he owed his advancement.

"Oh, don't I, just. What a rogue he was! And wasn't Mrs Preen taken in, neither! Remember!—don't I?—

> 'I remember, I remember,
> The cot where I was born;
> And now I 've got a bigger house,
> I look on it with scorn.'

Why, you know you admired that cunning thief, Mrs Preen."

"Don't call him a thief, Mr Checketts. He was a very good young man."

"Though he did wear my lord's pocket handkerchiefs; and went out and passed himself off as a young nobleman, no doubt."

"Nothing was ever proved against him," said Mrs Preen; "and he spoke French and Italian with perfect fluency. Ah! what a fine complexioned young man he was, to be sure!"

"About as black as a nigger; but he was not so black without as he was within. I never heard such propositions as *he* made to me."

"Oh, it was only to try you; he told me so," said Gurgles. "Though I confess I do not like people who go to try others; they may fall themselves, and serve them right if they do. The young man was a stranger and a servant within our gates; and I never talk to foreigners myself."

"True British prejudice," sneered Mrs Preen; "true British prejudice!"

It is to be observed that all those people who talk about British prejudice, as if, like so-called British spirits, it was something deleterious, loftily pretend to have no prejudices themselves; or, perhaps, not to be British at all.

"Well, I'm glad old Gurgles is on my side," said Checketts, familiarly patting that worthy on the shoulder. "And I'm glad his prejudice is *British* prejudice; 'cos, if it is, I'm sure it's of the right sort. And let me tell you that I don't see why we should not be proud of British prejudice, Mrs Preen. Perhaps, mum, you will tell me anything really British that is bad; 'cos if you can, tell me—I don't know of it, not I."

"British brandy," murmured Gurgles, actually without any quotation from his favourite editor.

"Well, 'tisn't so good as Cognac; but you can't beat British gin, rum, whisky, or porter. Brandy ain't our native production. They don't go in for brandy, the British; but, for all that, I don't like to hear them run down, especially by their own people. As for prejudice against foreigners, sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's bad. César Negretti I don't know any bad of, except what he was said to be guilty of; and as my lord forgave him, why I will forgive him too. But there, I had a prejudice against him."

"He was sweetly inclined towards religion," said Gurgles; "and took much pleasure in reading that precious magazine, which I offered, and often, too often, in vain, to lend you, Mr Checketts."

"Much pleasure in reading! Oh, good gracious," said Mr Checketts, with a wide grin on his misbelieving countenance ; "O Mr Gurgles, if you knew all!"

Here a loud summons from the hall bell put an end to the conference ; and presently Mr Slates announced that his lordship was coming up the outer stairs with a young lady.

"Hurrah! I said he was innocent," cried Checketts ; "so they've set him free."

"'Tisn't the young lord ; it is the old one. How pale he looks, and tottering ; and the young lady with him is no other than Miss Winifred Vaughan."

"Miss Vaughan! how comes she here?" said Mrs Preen. "I suppose we shall have Lady Sark and her belongings next."

"Hush!" said Gurgles. "They are in the hall ; they must not hear a whisper."

Mr Roskell was at the door waiting for Lord Chesterton. There is something very noble and very touching in the affection of an old servant, after any misfortune or any illness ; and Lord Chesterton, in the middle of his trouble, could not help noticing the attentive, unobtrusive care that his steward lavished on him. Only one other servant was there : Mr Checketts could not restrain his zeal, and had bounded up the stairs, although Gurgles was almost ready to pull him by the coat-tails to prevent him. Yet even he, wishing to say something—to ask if Lord Wimpole were well, and when he was coming home—remained respectfully silent ; and his hopes fell when he saw the sad face of Lord Chesterton, and the reddened eyes and flushed cheeks of Winifred Vaughan.

"O Mr Roskell," said his lordship, greatly moved, "you see we are back again." He could, if society had only permitted him, have given the hand of the good fellow a hearty shake. "But I don't feel very well. Give me your arm upstairs. My dear, you can lean on me."

And so the three went gently up the staircase—so wide and so fitly planned for the days when the cavalier, with his sword hanging across his coat-tails, escorted the lady in a hoop *à la* Pompadour ; and wide enough to admit even them. Up the stairs, from the panelled walls of which looked down ancestors of Lord Chesterton, grim in breastplate and buff coat, or smil-

ing in their wigs and blue satin coats. Up the stairs, until they came to the chief reception-room, where there were other portraits, and that great ancestral tree of which Lord Wimpole had a smaller copy in his room. There they stayed, the girl clinging to the hand of the old nobleman, who held himself upright by an effort; and, but that he knew he had some one to support, would have himself fallen.

With an effort to seem unconcerned, Roskell asked his master whether he would take any refreshment.

An affirmative nod was the answer.

"Shall I lay for three, my lord?" asked Roskell, as naturally as he could.

"No," returned Lord Chesterton. "Don't you see that we are alone?

He was sorry he had spoken so testily; but it was wrung from him. When the servant was gone, he turned to Winifred, and said—

"Alas! my daughter, what a welcome home! In what a manner does my son's bride enter her father's house!"

Winifred put her hands first upon his arm, and then let them creep up till they rested upon his shoulders; and, raising herself to kiss him, she exclaimed—

"O father! father! for I must call you so, is it not well to come here in sorrow? Do you think that the greatest joy that earth could give could make you and Philip half so dear?"

"And I," said the Earl in his secret heart—"and I am the cause of all this sorrow, of his guilt and trial, and of her desolation. Heaven pardon me! My sins are heavy; but the punishment is heavier than I can bear."

Silent, then, for a moment, stood these two, the girl caressing and breathing words of comfort, of faith and hope, into the ears of the old man—when a soft knock was heard, and Mr Roskell—for he would let no one else witness their sorrow—presented the card of Mr Edgar Wade. The Earl started as if he had been stung.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THREE TRAVELLERS IN KENT.

Down through the garden of England, after indulging in certain dodgings, twistings, twirlings, and bendings in the neighbourhood of the Tower, of Ratcliff Highway, of Wapping—redolent of sailors, tar, and shrimps—and of Greenwich, the astute César Negretti and Mr Samuel Brownjohn, St. P.C., as he signed himself, tracked their prey.

Here and there, the two travellers heard of their prey having made a purchase, or having visited a friend ; and Mr Brownjohn, in his researches, came upon the tracks of several excellently laid plans of smugglers—about the river side and elsewhere—and hugged himself with the possibility of laying a plot which should redound to his credit, and to the benefit of his Majesty's customs.

Still, by chance, or by the design of the wary Maltese—for the purpose, as we have said, of lingering out the capture—Mr Martin—or, as César more properly called him, Le Père Martin—was heard of continually, but never seen. They always arrived too late, just after the man had left ; or, if they came to a place where he was expected, they got there too soon, and the old Bolognese sea-dog, by accident or design, never came near their spider's web.

It needed all the bull-dog tenacity of the dull but faithful Brownjohn to hold on to what he called his "flying Dutchman." But when he had him, he would hold him. Day by day, he felt more and more convinced of his guilt. Now and then they heard of the man purchasing little articles, and paying for them in old French money.

"That 's what he took, Negretti. Do you see ? The Widow Martin had matters about her more precious than a few dull papers."

"What 's that you said about papers, my Brownjohn ? " asked the Maltese, bringing down his movable scalp towards his sparkling eyes. "Papers ! "

"I say," answered Brownjohn, "that the fellow laid his hand

on some swag, and burned the papers out of spite. Old Daylight has a theory about them."

"Old Daylight! Delightful old pump!"

The reader will remember that the Maltese was very fluent with his slang—which, indeed, is the case with most foreigners who learn a language, not by book, but orally; whereas, they who learn it from the best authors speak with exceeding correctness.

"Pump! do you call him?" said Brownjohn, generously defending his rival. "I tell you, Negretti, that he is hard to beat."

"He has got hold of the wrong end of the stick now, my Brownjohn. Let me see, we shall have our bird to-morrow. He will pass over Rochester Bridge. You will seize him, Brownjohn. Those old sea-dogs are spiteful!"

"Spiteful or not," said the Bow Street runner, "I'll nab him. I'd seize the devil if I had a warrant for him—for burglary, let us say."

"Admirable, my friend," sneered Negretti. "The black-coated fellows say that *he* did break into Paradise. A fiction, my Brownjohn, made up by those priests. Priest, or parson, or preaching cobbler, they are all the same. I don't believe 'em, Brownjohn. Now, do you believe in that childish thing, the devil, with his horns and his tail?"

Here, as if the matter was full of the sweetest delight and fun to him, Mr César Negretti burst out into a shriek of wild laughter, jumped about, cracked his finger joints, and seemed full of a mirth which no Englishman could understand. Foreign wit is brilliant, delightful, full of the best and finest charms, no doubt; but foreign humour is a thing by itself—often obscene, often utterly profane, always obscure to any one but a native. Brownjohn looked up with a stare, and merely said—

"Well, Negretti, if I did not believe in the devil before I saw you, I do so *now*. What a wicked imp you are! You are young now. Wait until you are old. I have nothing to do with your belief, nor you with mine; but this I may tell you—I believe in the devil sufficiently to try to keep out of his way."

"*Ah, le beau diable!*" shrieked César. "A beautiful fiction,

a fine character. Should not I like to have been in his place with Madame Eve! Eh, my Brownjohn?"

"Stow your gammon," was the reply, "and come on."

Thus with a sturdy, honest grunt, and a significant hint, Brownjohn fully conveyed to the Maltese that he did not desire to hear any more of his Biblical disquisitions, and away the two trudged.

The October air was keen and sharp; the yellow leaves fell, even before the wind shook them; the atmosphere was heavy with the smell of autumn; but here and there was found a tree full of yellow luscious pears, and others of rosy-cheeked apples, in the orchard fields; while the hop-pickers, from London and the Kentish towns and villages, were moving backwards and forwards seeking for employment.

César Negretti was delighted with his wandering life; and seized greedily upon what fruits he could get, to the great disgust of Brownjohn. It was somewhat characteristic of him, that before his hunger was satiated—or, rather, while that process was going on—he declared that the fruit was, as indeed it was, ripe and delicious; when, however, he had had sufficient, he abused England and English fruit, and contrasted the vine-clad hills of the Rhine and South of France, greatly to the disadvantage of Great Britain.

"A beastly country, my Brownjohn," he would say, if it blew cold and was rainy. "A brutal, cold, foggy, miserable country!"

"It's good enough for me," said the Englishman. "It grows about the best women, the prettiest girls, and the staunchest men as I know. We can stand against the world, and conquer it, Mr César."

Englishmen had not, in those days, lost the belief in their country; and were by no means disposed to admit that any foreign power had only to look at the white cliffs of Albion in order to conquer us. And yet the simple people had come through a very hard struggle, and had known what defeat was, as well as how costly victory is, even to the conqueror.

"Bah! wretched pride of the barbarian," crowed the joyous Maltese. "Who, when abroad, prides himself on being a Briton? When shall we get the better of that? I tell you, my Brownjohn, this island is a miserable pigsty."

"Well," answered the officer, "just stop and look down at the pig's pound."

He pointed to the city of Rochester—the Medway winding its shining way in the morning sun, and gliding joyously, it seemed, under the quaint arches of old Rochester Bridge, and beneath the walls of the Castle. A little beyond the Castle rose the tower of the Cathedral, a picture of the good old times when chivalry, strength, and manhood guarded the Church; while nestling round both were the bourgeois, whose gabled roofs, red tiled, quaintly pointed, and of various shapes, marked the lines of streets in the picturesque old town.

Past this ancient bridge—at the foot of which were some curious old inns, at which the Canterbury pilgrims might have stopped—the Medway ran, broadening out, until it joined the Thames; and at the confluence of these rivers there lay such a number of tall old three-deckers and fine first-rate frigates—no more in these days to see any service—that the British heart of Brownjohn bounded with what a modern young gentleman—half snob, half cynic, and the third half, as Pat would say, coward—would call the exultation of "a British snob."

"There," said the Bow Street runner, "there you are. If England is a pigsty, our young pigs have a pretty pound. Why, I am jiggered, if you was aboard one of those craft, and had some of the captains I 've heard speak of, dashed if they would'nt give you a round dozen for speaking ill of their country; and"—here Brownjohn scratched the back of his ear with one hand, as he took his hat off—"I'd help 'em, I would."

César shrieked with ironical laughter, said that he knew very well what those captains were—he 'd seen some of them at Malta; and, finding that it annoyed Brownjohn, anathematised their common country, and wished that his Majesty's land and sea forces were in a much hotter place than any in which they have yet seen service.

Thus they went down the long dip of Gad's Hill, and into the drawn-out, ugly, and poor street which forms one-fourth of the "three towns"—Strood, Rochester, and Chatham. The man they sought had some business there, at Rochester, be-

sides catching Medway smelts, even if it were the season. But Brownjohn was destined to be disappointed. It seemed to him that he had never been so long in finding out a man who was wanted.

And passing over this stage of our story, may be seen our young friend Patsy Quelch, to whom the predatory habits which are evolved in tracking any one seemed of the most natural kind.

This Celtic "Arab," as they now call street boys, in philanthropic slang, had grown manifestly thinner, but was in admirable health. His merry blue eyes twinkled with a weird kind of revenge when he thought of César Negretti. There seems, as we have often witnessed since the good old days, an hereditary hatred between the Italians and the Irish, favoured sons of the Holy Father as they both are ; and Patsy, who knew no more of Malta than a Cingalese monkey does of holy water, hated him for his country as well as himself. The migratory tribe to which Patsy belonged had branches in and about Field Lane, Cross Street, and other places running into Hatton Garden—then a most respectable street, near which Mr Laing, the magistrate, gave his decisions ; and one of these branches carried on a long war with the Italians, image makers and looking-glass manufacturers, who had already settled in Leather Lane.

As for his country trip, Patsy enjoyed it as a Whitechapel boy likes hopping. He had no difficulty in picking up a living. The kindness of the poor to each other is proverbial. "If it were not for the poor," says the proverb, "the poor would perish ;" and it is, indeed, true. Patsy's merry face, his funny brogue—which the humorous dog took care to intensify—his snatches of Irish song, and his London street tumbling, all did him good service ; and his story, that he was after "a father of his !" the boy spoke as if he had many such near relations ; without any intention, however, of impugning the virtue of Mrs Quelch, a virtue common to Irish women, and who, in that case, compare favourably with both English and Scotch ladies of their order. This story was readily believed ; it being no extraordinary occurrence for a boy to be separated from his parents in the fruit-gathering season ; or, indeed, at any time

from hay-time to hopping, during which period the nomadic tribes of Whitechapel and St Giles's carried their strong arms and willing hearts into the southern counties.

Sometimes Patsy slept in a barn, sometimes in a cottage, sometimes in a traveller's lodging-house—there being many such along the line he marched, where for twopence a-night he could snore away the hours comfortably, and from the window of which he now and again caught glimpses of Brownjohn and Negretti, sometimes "footing it" on their legal mission, sometimes proceeding in the light cart of the rural constabulary—to whom, of course, an officer of Mr Brownjohn's standing was somebody to be looked up to—the London officer of police being, like every thing and body from London, regarded as superior in kind, if not in nature. It often happened that Patsy would venture even near enough to hear the conversations and plans of the couple. Upon information thus received, he would, perhaps, hasten forward to a given place; or he would linger behind, trusting to a lift from a friendly cart or the waggon of a benighted carrier to set him forward.

He had heard of the meeting at Rochester Bridge; and, true to his vengeance—hardly even defined to himself, although it was certain that he knew of something which César Negretti had committed, contrary not only to good manners, but also to sound English laws—he was there; and, climbing over the parapet, lay down and listened to the friends as they talked, lazily lounging and sunning, as if they were two unconcerned vagrants or wandering artists; and heard Brownjohn's grumbled discontent, when, in the close of the evening, no one came.

"I tell you what, Negretti—you are leading us a pretty dance. I expect you and that foreign sailor you met at Greenwich have been trying to fool me."

"By the holy Virgin!"—here he crossed himself; for it was indicative of him that, although he laughed with the heartiness of a Voltairean at religion, he yet preserved these marks of piety—"By the Virgin and the blessed saints"——

"Which you don't believe in," said his companion, with a yawn.

"Neither do you, my Brownjohn. You English are a nation

of infidels, they say abroad. You believe in nothing but St Bank-note and St Parliament."

"If I don't believe in the blessed saints," returned the Englishman, "I don't swear by them. If you have led me a fool's dance, you shall smart for it—indeed you shall; and you know it."

"What does César Negretti fear?"

This was said with the immense bombast of a coward, and with as great a show of courage as if Negretti were Julius Cæsar himself.

"Don't talk like a fool," returned Brownjohn, who had seen the hero in tears, wearing a yellow and greenish complexion, and dissolved by the fear of law. "*You* know that our hold is not so slight that you can get so easily away."

"But, my Brownjohn,"—here the Maltese opened his beautiful, lustrous black eyes, elevated his eyebrows, and sent his movable scalp to the fore-middle of his cranium, where the bumps of benevolence and veneration ought to have been—"but, my friend"——

"Don't call me your friend till you have proved yourself mine."

"I will, I will—by Jupiter, by Heaven, or by the other place, if you like that better."

Here Patsy, peeping through the old stone balustrade, descried some one coming towards the two. It was only a Kentish constable, to whom Brownjohn muttered a few words, and who then moved slowly off.

"I thought it was my messenger," said Negretti. "He will be sure to come."

"He does not look like it," said the Bow Street runner; "not a bit as if he would. How do you know as he would come?"

"Because, my Brownjohn, we are a kind of Freemasons; we have secret societies in our little island; and I am one. "*He*"—here he nodded towards Strood—"is one, too. I am much superior to him. I could condemn him to death, if he betrayed or deceived me."

Mr Brownjohn's English and Philistine mental remark was, "You're a pretty fellow to be superior to any one;" but he

said nothing. His experience had taught him something of these societies — carbonadoes, he called them, meaning, of course, *carbonari*—which existed, and do yet exist, among the inhabitants of Malta, Gibraltar, and other British possessions in the Mediterranean, and even reached Smyrna and India. He was meditating upon the difficult question as to whether Negretti was really serious or cajoling him, and wishing he had only been to an English university, or college, as he phrased it; in which case he profoundly believed that he should have known every language in modern, as well as ancient, use—when the Maltese, listening as if to a cry, exclaimed—

"Do you hear that, my Brownjohn. 'Tis he!"

"He!—who? The man we want?"

"No; listen again. 'Tis Antonelli."

The police officer listened; and a low, shrill cry, like that of some sea bird, rose from the other side of the bridge, near the water's edge.

"I hear it. What does it mean? A signal of course."

"Yes; the Père Martin has escaped, as it seems to me; but wait."

Upon this César put his hands—formed into something like a concave shell—before his mouth, and gave another low cry. In tone it was exactly like that just heard; and its answer, varied somewhat, did not linger long upon the evening air.

"He will come! Wait now, my impatient friend, and see if I deceive you."

Soon, Brownjohn saw a slouching, but lithe and active figure, not unlike that of Negretti himself. It was that of an Italian sailor, who certainly saluted César very respectfully, and spoke some hurried words to him.

"'Tis as I thought," said that worthy, hurriedly, to Brownjohn. Then, in Italian, "Go—that will do, Nellino!"

The spy, with another salute, slunk away; and soon disappeared by the water-side.

"Our old friend, whom we so much desire to see, my Brownjohn, is beyond our reach."

"Dash my buttons! and we are fooling here! I'll pinch you, by jingo, for this, Negretti!"

"Oh, you impatient man! Wait till I have finished. He

is beyond our reach at present; but he is in a trap. He has fallen down the river in a boat; and will join his own boat, that is in Dover harbour."

"It must be a cockle-shell, to be there," sneered Brownjohn. "Are you sure of this?"

"I swear it!"

"Come along, then. We are hungry, and frozen almost!"

"We need not hurry. There are good inns at Rochester. We can go by coach in the morning."

"Well, come to the Crown, then. There's an old friend of mine there who keeps that."

And so, again, after this Will o' the Wisp of a Dutch sailor —as the tall boy, described in the first chapter, called him— the two trudged. As they passed the house of the Five Poor Travellers who are nightly sheltered by the charity of the lamented Mr Watts, Mr Brownjohn looked up and read the inscription.

"'Poor Travellers,'" he repeated, "'not being Rogues or Proctors.' Well, he was a benevolent old gentleman! God rest his soul!"

"You are praying for the dead; and yet you are a Protestant," sniggered the observant Maltese. "You are a riddle, you English."

"May be! Pray for the dead! No, my lad, that's useless: a man's actions pray for himself. The dead are dead!"

"Not always—*non sempre—pas toujours!*" Thus, in three tongues, and with a chatter of his whole teeth, muttered this eccentric Maltese to himself. "Come along, my friend. Come, let us eat—let us drink!"

One of the Five Poor Travellers, sleeping soundly as a tired babe that night, was Patsy Quelch!

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR BROWNJOHN FINDS WHOM HE SOUGHT.

PATSY QUELCH, early the next morning, released himself from the charitable resting-place provided by worthy Mr Richard

Watts; and, as he was neither a rogue nor a proctor, it is to be presumed that the charity was not abused.

True to his purpose, he set forward towards Dover, and was soon overtaken by an early traveller, in a gig with high wheels and a black body of capacious dimensions, in which was a little cabinet full of drawers: the said drawers containing patterns of silks, ribbons, cloths, and other things dealt in by a London warehouseman.

The enterprising bagman who drove this vehicle was furnished with a box-coat, with huge collar and lappels; a red worsted comforter which mingled with his red whiskers; box-bottomed trousers—that is, opened up to the calf of his leg, and fastened with brass buttons; Wellington boots; a flat hat, with curled sides, turned up with green for the sake of his eyes; and a tremendous gig whip, with a silver-mounted handle and a holly stem, full of knots, and polished and varnished highly.

This whip Mr Charley Folaire never laid on the back of his flea-bitten gelding, which went on at a rare pace, and never required flagellation. The thong was, therefore, twisted into a loop, with the thin end of whipcord—upon which cruel drivers were wont to put a small button to stimulate their steeds—round the handle of the whip.

Charley, who was of a sanguine disposition and of iron constitution, had an eye to his horse, as one of the first requirements in driving a quick trade; and having, at the Crown, in Rochester, overnight, been the chairman of the "Commercials," had succeeded in establishing so much harmony and good-fellowship, that he had seen three of his six companions under the table, had left two more disputing upon "saving grace" and predestination—the gentlemen were of a serious turn, and religious over their wine, of which "commercial" rules then obliged them to drink a good deal—and had parted with the sixth at the top of the stairs, after having been made the depository of some family secrets of a grave nature.

"'*In vino veritas!*'" said Charley Folaire, who had been educated at Merchant Taylors'. "Poor fellow! Who would have thought that his wife ran away with a lieutenant of Marines? *That's* why he hates the army. No wonder! Now, then, to business."

The sleepy boots was then summoned ; an early breakfast ordered ; and while César Negretti and Sam Brownjohn were sleeping the sleep of innocence, and the six commercials recovering from their harmonious evening, Mr Charley Folaire was in his gig, after having carefully looked to every buckle and strap of his harness, and adjusted the bit and curb of his horse. Then, after taking his reins, he settled himself in his warm box-coat, pulled up his red comforter, tucking the ends of his whiskers therein to keep his neck warm, and had his impatient steed walked quietly out of the gateway, so as not to wake his fellow-commercials.

"I'll steal a march on them," said Charley, laughing quietly to himself, till his face became as red as his comforter. "By jingo ! they nearly gave me a headache, though ; only I always pay extra for good old stuff. Let me see. Ah ! thank goodness, as clear as a bell !"

Here the bagman shook his head to ascertain that his ideas were all right ; pulled in his horse, which, well-fed as its master, was fresh ; glanced down at the traces, and smoothed the sides of his gallant steed with the loop of his whip.

He was soon past the long, unpleasant street which forms the town of Chatham ; and his horse, warming to its work in the bright, keen morning, was going with admirable pluck, pace, and steadiness, when, just as he was getting over the crown of a hill, and about to make a rare pace on a level stretch of a mile or so, Charley, in smoothing his horse with his looped-up whip, and adjuring him to be steady, dropped that instrument of torture—in some hands, but never in his—and found it difficult to get out of his commercial throne, hampered as he was with a heavy box-coat, and driving a horse which thought very little of ten good miles an hour.

He naturally looked round for help, "wohoaed," and wished his steed to stand still. But the extra feed given that animal on purpose to pass by the other commercials, had made it restive ; and it is no easy task to drop out of a tall gig, and to hold a high-spirited horse at the same time.

Luckily, just in time to prevent a disaster in the commercial world—for Charley Folaire was well-known on the road, and in London, as one of the smartest of country travellers—Mr

Patsy Quelch picked up the whip, ran with the speed of an Irish gossoon or English greyhound after the gig, and presented the pride of the road with his silver-mounted holly-stem stimulator.

Charley was naturally grateful. He was as proud of his whip as a king might be of his sceptre; always had it carried into the commercial room; and boasted that there "was not such another fishing-rod on the road."

"That's a good boy," said Charley, gratefully. "The blessed horse might have pitched me on my head, as poor Tom Tapeson was killed last spring; and I fall heavy, I do. Why, I weigh twelve stone, or nigh upon thirteen. Run to the head of the horse, lad, while I take off my glove and give you a shilling."

"I'd rather you'd give me a lift, sir," said the boy, touching his cap.

"A lift—how far?"

"Oh, just a little way" said Patsy, in a winning, pleasant tone; "as far as Dover."

"Dover, eh! D'ye call that a little way? Why it's some miles to Sittingbourne, where I first do business."

"Is it, sir? I didn't know; but I want to go there."

"What for?"

"To see my"—here Patsy paused—"to see my uncle, sir; he's a sailor."

"Poor lad! and my uncle was a sailor, too! Well, my lad, you seem a light weight."

"I won't sit heavy, sir," said Patsy, as if willingness could take a stone or so of his weight away.

Charley Folaire smiled at this. He was a good-natured fellow, fond of studying character, and eager to get on, and tired of holding in his horse.

"Here, jump up, then, my lad," said he, undoing the apron of his gig with his left hand, and giving it to the boy, who sprang upwards with a light step.

"And now," said Charley to his horse—"now, Chief Baron, you may step it."

The Chief Baron did "step it;" and Patsy, drawing on his imagination for his facts, told so moving a story to Charley,

that Mr Folaire stood the young adventurer a good breakfast, while he himself ran in and out the various shops, and the Chief Baron had his legs rubbed down with a wet brush and his mouth refreshed with wet hay and half a pail of water. Patsy then again mounted ; and this time was a listener, while Charley Folaire told him of his own fortunes. How his father had been a commercial, and had ended his eventful life by slipping on an orange-peel coming down the steps of a chapel. How his principals—who were gentlemen of large means and undoubted probity—had regarded that death, as Charley himself felt inclined to do, in the light of a martyrdom. How the Rev. Caspar M'Callem had preached a charity sermon, and had collected a "little nest egg" for the old woman. How the old woman took a lodging-house at the West End, and had been able to save sundry other little nest eggs. How the principals had "laid their 'eads together, and good uns they were !" and put one of the children at Merchant Taylors' School, where he —no one less than Charley Folaire himself—had the blessing of a good education, and became a dab at cyphering. How the other boy was provided for in a like manner, and became "a Blue." How Charley thought it an immense honour to be "a Blue ;" and other matters.

"The end of it all was," said Charley, as they drove through Canterbury, where there was another set of eager customers ready to inspect Charley's patterns, and allow him to book his orders ; "that those principals—God bless them !—had me apprenticed, whereby I 'm a citizen of London ; made me a buyer first, and then a traveller ; and now I get a larger screw than my poor dad did."

"What 's a screw, sir ?" said Patsy.

"Screw ?" said Charley ; "sometimes it 's a horse, but in this case it 's the browns—my salary—paid quarterly, like a gentleman, d 'ye see ? And a commission besides, which I shall add to to-day. They seemed eager at Sittingbourne—they 'll be ravenous at Dover."

"You 're a very kind gentleman," said Patsy, truly enough ; "and I 'm sure you deserve what you get."

"And you 're not a bad boy," returned Charley. "Now, you may learn from my story—'cos, you see, it was owing to

my old dad—that the righteous man is not forsaken! nor do his widow and chicks have to beg their bread."

That was Charley's reading of the Scripture, and he was not far wrong. But one of the "chicks," who had grown to be "a good-sized old cock, with very red gills"—as Folaire described himself—took care to be always on the alert, and always up early, for the purpose of picking up the worm.

"Now, my lad," said Charley, as they drove into the courtyard of an ancient inn in Canterbury, "this is the Fleur-de-Lys, one of the best inns in the county of Kent, if not the best; and that *is* saying a good deal. Jump down and help me with those boxes. It 's a lucky day with me. I never do a good turn to a fellow-creature, but it brings good luck to me. Look here, lad; you can earn a shilling by bringing a few of those boxes with me. Look sharp! Sharp 's the word! Some of those fellows, finding no fish at Sittingbourne, may come on here hot-foot. But, Lord bless you! there 's not one of 'em got such a piece of 'orseflesh as the Chief Baron."

Folaire, although educated at Merchant Taylors', had learned to drop his H's, and speak the bagman's lingo amidst the select circle he moved in.

Patsy picked up his boxes, and rendered himself useful "in a jiffy," as Charley Folaire termed it; and trotted in and out the shops, unstrapped the light boxes, and strapped them up again, as if he had been used to it.

"Getting on in the world, Mr Folaire," said the shopman; "you 've got an assistant."

"Ye-es," said Charley. "Smart lad. Taking him out for an airing, just to blow a little of the London smoke out of him. That 's it, Patsy—strap 'em up."

"Why, the boy is Hirish, by his name," said the young fellow.

"That 's no worse nor no better than being a Cockney, is it, sir?" asked Mr Folaire of the principal, who was selecting the goods.

Patsy gave him a grateful look; and the linen-draper smiled.

"Blow nationalities, sir!" added Charley Folaire, as he booked a good order. "Any more winter cloth, sir? We shall have it sharp this time. No! thank you, sir, all the

same. What I say is, let the best win. Why, I am descended from the Irish myself on my grandmother's side; and my father's grandfather was a Frenchman. We're a cross-breed, we English. That's what makes us cut our eye-teeth so soon."

Thus, engaged in trade, feasting at his patron's expense off such joints of cold beef, and such tankards of foaming Kentish ale as would have made the proprietor of the Hôtel des Etrangères stare and gasp, Patsy Quelch reached Dover some time before the mail coach got in; very pleased with his kind friend, and sorry to part with him. When they came to the end of Snargate Street, Patsy got down—Mr Charley Folaire was going to put up at the Ship, not far from the harbour—and his new friend gave him his shilling, and said—

"Now, my boy, I'm off again to-morrow round the coast; and I'm busy to-night, for I've to write out my orders, and post them up by the night mail; but if ever you want a lift again in London, where you come from, you come to me. There's my address."

He tore off one of the tops of the invoices belonging to the firm: "Cook and Selling, St Paul's Churchyard."

"And my name's Charley Folaire. Shall you forget it?"

"'Deed no, sir!" said Patsy, his eye brightening as he spoke; for he had regarded Charley with a warm affection since he heard he was his countryman, or a small portion of one. "You're a jule (jewel) of a gentleman, ye are."

"Well, I've got the makings of one, my boy," said he to Patsy. "Don't forget me, if you want me."

"'Deed I won't, sir, nor ever forget your name. Will the coach be in soon, sir?"

"Yes; it will drive into the market-place. There you are," said he, pointing in the direction; "and there's the harbour, where you may hear about your uncle."

So the two parted for a time. Patsy, whose sharp eyes had covered every inch of the road, and had failed to discover his two acquaintances, César and Brownjohn, vanished to look after the coach, and was soon rewarded by seeing the two worthies descend, cold and cramped; the Maltese swearing against the horrid climate, and Sam Brownjohn still silently intent upon his object.

"Let us drink, my Brownjohn," said César; "it will help to chase away this devil cold."

"It has been a cold drive," said the Bow Street runner, "and I 've no objection. But, mind you, no loitering! If we don't catch our man, I 'll pinch you, Negretti."

"Pah! there 's no fear. My friend dare not deceive me. Come on!"

And, swinging his bundle, the Maltese strode into the hotel.

Soon they emerged, Mr Brownjohn wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, a practice not unknown in the "lower middle" classes, as the papers have it.

"Now, march!" said Brownjohn, sternly. "That 's the way to the harbour!"

Patsy followed, quietly and silently.

At the muddy little harbour, with his back against a post, ruddy with sea breezes, his hair grizzled with time, and falling in ringlets over his ears, which were adorned with gold rings, stood a handsome, open-browed man, weather-beaten and wrinkled, blue-eyed, honest, and even venerable in look. He was speaking to his partner, who, in a French fishing-smack, was getting all ready to clear out.

"All ready, master," said the sailor on board, in French.

"Then I 'll slip in, and be off. Heigho! I am always sad as the dark night when I come to England!"

"We 'll be better in France."

"No, you won't!" exclaimed a gruff voice, putting a heavy hand on the shoulder of the old man.

"Be peaceful, my friend," returned the old man, quietly. "Why shall I not go? Are you an officer of the marine law?"

"No; he 's a land shark," simpered César Negretti; "and he wants you."

"Why, in the name of Heaven?"

"Because your name is the Père Martin. I knew you at Malta."

"César, by the sacred Virgin!"

"Yes. You are, then, the Père Martin?"

"I am. What then, gentlemen?"

"Then I arrest you for the murder of Estelle Martin, at Kensal-Green, London."

"O Heaven! The good God! Estelle!—my poor Estelle!"

The old man bent his venerable head, and seemed to weep.

"Oh, those French!—what actors they are! Now you are all right, my Brownjohn. Take much care of him. I'll go off to seek some ship, to find my warmer home."

As César said these words, up limped no one less than Patsy Quelch, singing out, as if his pent-up eagerness burst suddenly from him—

"Don't let him go, Mr Officer! Don't, please! Only look what he's got in that there bundle of his'n!"

CHAPTER XXX.

"HERE LAY THE VICTIM: THUS WAS DEALT THE BLOW."

WHEN Old Daylight, otherwise Mr Tom Forster, heard his favourite and adopted heir declare that he would defend Lord Wimpole with his life, nothing more appropriate rose to his lips than his old exclamation, "Poor human nature!" But, on mature reflection, he thought that this would not do. So he walked up to the mantelshelf, gazed on the portrait of Lord Brougham, remarked on the chiselling of that portentous nose, and, taking out his red bandana, blew his own.

The glittering, clever, weary eyes of the barrister followed the old man about the room, also without remark. Mr Forster stopped opposite the bouquet, and examined it as if he were a florist; but he saw no flowers. He then paused, as if reading with intense interest the red labels of a four-volume copy of Blackstone's "Commentaries on the Laws of England," a book then regarded as a corner-stone of all that was and is precious in law; but he hardly saw the red label and the gold letters.

Tom Forster was engaged in a difficult matter. When a conscientious man finds that his friend and companion is bent upon that which he knows to be foolish, and yet that he, the conscientious one, approves, because it is noble, or romantic, or virtuous, then such a one would be situated precisely as was Tom Forster.

"So," he said at last, after in vain seeking for a point upon which to attack him—"so, my dear Edgar—I beg your pardon, Mr Wade."

What is it that prompts us to call those whom we love by their Christian names, as if those names brought them closer to our hearts? "Is it," thought this simple old fellow—"is it because the names have been hallowed and rendered dear at the font of Christ? It may be so."

"Pardon!" returned Edgar—"as if I had to pardon you, my dear sir! Call me what you like."

"Noble soul!" thought Old Daylight, hardly remarking the cold, stern voice. "But I won't take liberties—in fact, I ought to call him, 'my lord.'" Then, continuing, he added, to himself, "No; I know my place, and who I am. I can't be much otherwise. He moves in one place, and I in another."

"Well," he said, "we will speak in a business way. You say that you intend to defend the so-called Lord Wimpole?"

"I do, as well as I can."

"Why so?"

"Because I believe him innocent.

"And I believe him guilty."

"You do," said the barrister, with a sad, slow smile, in which his eyes took no part. "You see, *I* don't; at least, I've no belief at all in the man's guilt or innocence. I keep my belief in suspense. What business has a man—a thing that crawls between heaven and earth for a few years—to have belief at all?"

Old Daylight looked up at the clever gentleman who said this so coldly, with astonishment.

"Of course, Lord Wimpole may have done this murder. So may you!"

Old Forster started. Being a man that planted a firm foot as to belief, he no more believed in the possibility of committing murder himself, than he did of toiling up to the top of the Monument and committing suicide.

"Well," he said, aloud, "it seems to me that you are drawing fine distinctions. Something like that very clever bishop, was it not?"

"Bishop Berkeley," explained Edgar.

"Yes. I read about him in Johnson. I do a great deal of reading while waiting in my office in Homer Street, I can tell you. Well, he said there was no matter. Perhaps he 's right: we are all but mere emanations from the Spirit"—here he put out his leg—"but, for my part, that looks very much like flesh and blood and Hessian boot; and I 've known that above fifty years!"

"Quite Johnsonian in your refutation of Berkeley," sneered the barrister, with a yawn.

"So," continued Daylight, "I might have murdered Estelle Martin; but I did not. I might have introduced that horrid form of murder we call 'burking,' for which Mr William Burke was quietly tucked up at Edinburgh last January, was it not?"

"It was," said Edgar Wade. "What a curious fellow that was, now! He has given rise to a new word. Quite an inventive genius."

"D—— his genius, and his invention too!" cried Old Daylight, impatiently. "I never did admire a man who was only celebrated for crime. But let us talk of our own business. At a small fire, one must roast one chicken at a time."

"Well, then," continued Edgar Wade, "you believe Lord Wimpole guilty?"

Old Daylight nodded.

"But that I never do such a thing, I would swear to it," he said.

"Yes, yes," returned Edgar, thoughtfully; "you would swear to it, because it is your business to believe, and to believe strongly. You see, I have not any business to believe in the matter. I do not want the young fellow to be proved guilty; for, among gentlemen, Mr Forster, there is such a thing as the honour of the family. I should wish that my family were kept free from any stain like *that*."

"That being murder," thought Old Tom Forster. "Well, *that's* a nice way of putting it."

"You see, actually and altogether, this new misfortune which has happened to my family is not a benefit to me. The house of Chesterton has a proud lineage; and I should rather that it always held up its head. *I* don't care to have spots upon my

family shield, Mr Forster; other people may not be so particular."

"How soon Pride grows!" thought the old man. "Well, *I* don't blame him. He will fill his place well."

"And for Lord Wimpole there is much to be said. I should not like to be removed, as he has been; and just, I hear, upon the eve of some proud alliance."

"There 's just the matter why I do not want you to mix yourself up in this affair. Lord Wimpole has had provocation enough, if you like. Let affairs take their usual course. Let the family solicitors pick out the most eminent Old Bailey barrister—let us say, Serjeant Bellingham or Sir John Lyover; and let them do what they can for him. It will be very romantic for one brother to defend another; but beyond *that* fact—and a gentleman, Mr Wade, never needs to be romantic—I must say that I do not see any good in what you propose to do. You see, everything is dead against Lord Wimpole. Upon a certain day, you made him acquainted with the fact that he must lose the place and fortune that he had fondly thought his own; and, in quick succession of this knowledge, this woman is found murdered."

"But that does not prove he did it."

"With his own foil, with his own glove, with his own footstep near the door of her dwelling: on that I'll be sworn!"

"Yet all that does not prove that he struck the blow."

"Who else could? Under so sudden a provocation, what aid would he be able to procure? What accomplice would be ready to his hand? Who has an interest in the murder but himself? Pray consider all this, Mr Wade?"

"I have considered it all."

"So have I," said Old Daylight, "and I pity him."

"I do not," said Edgar, coldly.

"I pity him so much," urged Old Daylight, "that I would not have you defend him. You would do little good. The whole facts of the case—of your relationship, of your father's folly and crime—would come out before an inquisitive public and a vulgar jury. Your devotion would be called romantic and heroic; your speech would be applauded as eloquent; the judge himself might compliment you; but, for all that, the

judge would sum up on the evidence, and Lord Wimpole, as you call him, would be cast for death."

Here Old Daylight paused, and passed the well-known bandana over his speaking countenance.

"But his father would interfere. He is powerful with the Prime Minister, his Grace the Duke of Wellington; and he would be pardoned. Why, a cousin of his is the Viceroy of Ireland, the Duke of Northumberland himself."

"Clear your mind of all that," returned Old Forster. "The Duke, however powerful he may be, is just, and would no more pardon him than he would hang himself. He would withstand the people—as he has withstood them—when he thinks they are wrong; but, when he knows they are right, he would no more act against them than he would have run away from the French. Moreover, Old Nosey, as the Radical papers say, is a man: his worst enemies cannot say that he is not. If Lord Wimpole had killed *you*, he would have forgiven him; but as he has killed a woman, why, he would hang him himself."

"The matter, however, does not rest with him, but with the Home Secretary and the King."

"God bless his Majesty, George the Fourth," cried the old Tory, reverently, "he is not so bad as people say, and has a kind heart; but, let me tell you, that when Arthur, Duke of Wellington, is in command, he is captain of the ship. And," added he, parenthetically, "*that 's* the man I like, and that the English like, too."

"I don't see how I should damage his cause," said Edgar Wade, after a pause, and with a curious gleam darting from his dark eyes. "I should not be romantic, nor eloquent, nor that sort of thing. You see, a prisoner's counsel may not address a jury on his behalf—though that will come too, when the good old times, of which you are so proud, shall have passed away."

"And of which you will be proud too," returned Old Forster, rubbing his large, strong hand over his short hair and capacious head. "You see, Mr Wade, every grey hair here has gone far to making me Conservative, as the new word calls us. But counsel take advantage of the judge, and work upon the sentiments of the jury. I don't see that a long speech, full of flummery, will be of much benefit, even in confusing the jury, who

should pronounce upon evidence alone. However, I will say no more. It is very generous of you to resolve as you do. But, you see, five and twenty years' experience, and much waiting in my little hole of an office in Homer Street—you know *I* did not bring my business home with me—have made me calmer and colder than you are. But you will act upon your impulses. You feel pity for Lord Wimpole, and for your father."

"Pity!" said Edgar Wade, bitterly, looking round his chambers, with a feeling of weariness and of disgust. "Pity for those who have kept me out of my birthright—who have confined me for years to such a dog-hole as this!"

Old Daylight looked up with surprise. To him, to have sat with books containing the essence of judicial wisdom—to have been of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple—to have had the chance of becoming a Bencher in course of time; or, if successful, to have worn a serjeant's coif; or, possibly, to have become a judge—was the acme of good fortune.

Mr Wade noticed his look, and smiled.

"You see," he added, "you do not understand everything in the office in Bow Street, and you do not know the disgust which I feel for these dry old fathers of the law, bound down by precedent, and never deciding but as some dry old fool decided before them. Pah! I am sick of them. I want to see the great world. I have been despoiled of my birthright; cribbed, cabined, and confined to a narrower, meaner sphere. Obliged to consort with mean interests, and meaner minds. And all because an ambitious, aristocratic father chose to supplant me by some one else."

"Here's human nature again," thought Old Daylight. "How eloquent we can grow upon our own wrongs!"

Then he spoke again.

"But after all, Edgar, Lord Wimpole did not injure you."

"Yes, he did—unconsciously, *perhaps;* but his very existence was an injury. Why did he push me from my seat? He has done me an irreparable injury; but for him, what might I not have been?"

"He may take the same view with regard to you. Don't you think that."

"I don't see it. Nothing can compensate for my lost youth. He has enjoyed all the advantages that, but for him, I should have had. And yet"—here the barrister spoke with gentler feeling, and with some regret—"when I saw him, he spoke me fair, and honestly, and nobly. Poor Philip, what a trial he must have had!"

"That 's just it. Poor human nature! You see, Mr Wade, that, upon his first hearing of this terrible news, he was ready to act upon his fresh, generous impulses ; and upon the honour which his education had instilled in him."

"Exactly. And he will continue to do so; or rather, he has continued?"

Edgar Wade put this—it seemed almost purposely, although the words dropped from him quite naturally—as a question ; as if he asked from his elder and companion his opinion of the matter.

"That 's just where it is. When you know human life as well as I do, you will see somewhat more clearly."

"Conceited old party!" thought Edgar Wade. "How these old folks do pride themselves upon the few short years they have passed prior to our existence!"

"Upon his first impulse he was, I will grant you," continued Old Forster, getting up and putting down a square-tipped forefinger, so as to make himself more impressive, "generous, right-minded, and even noble. Then you leave him to reflection ; and the drear reality of loss of birth, position, fortune, is borne in upon him. He finds the sacrifice too great. He casts about him ; remembers the letters you have shown him, and that they were upon your unsupported evidence. He thinks again, and remembers that there is but one witness alive whose testimony is worth anything. His father may deny those letters—they may be but forgeries. He seeks this woman—a venal creature, as her history proves. He goes there without confessing his purpose, even to himself. He will, let us say, temporise with her ; perhaps bribe her, and get her to be on his side."

"It might have been so," uttered Mr Wade, looking with those dark, distant, feeling eyes of his across Garden Court and at the old Temple Hall.

"It was so, no doubt. The devil never puts the worst face upon the temptation that he offers us. He bids us seek for truth, that he may make us embrace a lie: to clear our innocence, he plunges us into a blacker crime. Poor human nature!"

"Poor, indeed," uttered the barrister, in a meditative sort of voice. "Perhaps it was, indeed, as you say, although I don't want to think so; and shall, indeed, dismiss all that you have urged against Philip Stanfield from my mind."

"What a generous, clear soul!" thought Old Daylight. Then he continued—"It was so. Obeying, then, this second impulse, which came to him when the first had grown faint and weak, he seeks this woman."

"You speak as if you had been at his elbow."

"It is nothing but a clear induction from facts afterwards ascertained," said the inductive philosopher. "He seeks this woman. He finds her alone. He ascertains that what you have said is true; that she has papers which corroborate yours; that she is possibly not so much inclined to be upon the old lord's side as she was; that time has made her reflect; and that, before she dies, she would fain make reparation and a clean breast of it, as these people call it; as if you could stain marble with ink for years, and wash it clean in a day. Then, sitting alone and waiting in her parlour while she gets refreshment, the temptation comes."

"Poor Philip," murmured the barrister, in a tone which was sad but convinced. "My poor deeply tried brother!"

"The temptation comes: it is too strong for him—for the devil had prepared him in case of accident, you know: he yields to the temptation. The lonely place, the solitary woman, the want of help—all are in his favour for the crime. He springs hurriedly on her—pulling the cloth with him as he rises—and stabs her. One blow is enough. She falls; and he is a murderer."

The barrister walked up and down his room, in great agitation, as the old philosopher described the scene as if he had been present. He said nothing; but his face expressed sorrow for the criminal so suddenly tried. Then he muttered—

"Say no more, Mr Forster, do not convince me too fully of my brother's guilt."

The inductive philosopher had spoken.

"That's how the murder was done," he added. "Now you know as much as I do."

Here the old man applied his bandana; for he, too, had been agitated by his recital.

"And yet you would hang that man; that grievously tempted man?"

"Mr Wade," said the philosopher, stoutly, "since you put it to me, I would. Men are made to resist a temptation, not to go out and meet it. My two books are the Bible and Shakespeare. One says, 'Being in the way, the LORD met me.' Awful, is it not? What if it should be, 'Being in the way, *the devil* met me?'"

"You must not apply texts in that fashion, Mr Forster," interjected Edgar, in a low voice.

"The other says—now listen!—

> 'How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes ill deeds done.'

There's the whole history of crime which has puzzled even judges," said the old fellow, as if judges were the essence of wisdom.

"I shall defend my brother still," said Edgar Wade.

He rose, and signified that the conference was at an end.

Mr Tom Forster took his hat; and, like one foiled in an ardent desire, sighed as he walked up to the beautiful bouquet, and smelled the flowers.

"Ah!" said he, "how grateful will she be for these! You are a noble fellow, Mr Wade. Will you bring them with you?"

He was thinking of poor Madame Eugenie Wade, lying almost unconscious.

"No; not now. I am going to call on Lord Chesterton. He wishes to see me."

"Phew!" whistled Old Daylight; and then he thought to himself, as he passed through the office of the industrious Scorem, who kept scratching away with his pen, "What new complication is this? Edgar is not out of the wood yet!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

"SO HERE WE MEET AT LAST! ART THOU MY SON?"

WHEN Edgar Wade lifted his eyes, which he had cast down in great humility, he saw before him one of the most beautiful young women he had ever seen, standing by the side of a stately gentleman—his father. What relation the lady was to Lord Chesterton, or whether she bore any, he knew not. He saw that she clung to him with confidence of support; and that, in her turn, her presence instilled some confidence into him.

Furthermore, he could see, from those dark and dreamy half-closed eyes of his, that the Earl was much shaken and troubled what to do. Nay, that his own presence there was not the most welcome in the world.

Old Daylight's warnings came back to him.

"Stand on your own right, Edgar Wade," said the old gentleman. "Mind you do not parley with the Earl; those people know of matters that you and I do *not*."

While he resolved these things in his mind—quick, agile, and flexible that mind was—the young lady, very strong, very straight, and very determined, said, with emphasis—

"And *this* is Mr Edgar Wade, is it?"

"Yes, my dear," said the Earl, putting up his soft, white hand, deprecatingly. "Let me introduce you to him, and then you can speak."

"Then I can be spoken to; but not until after introduction," thought Edgar Wade, shutting his teeth. "Well, I suppose it is the right way in this proud circle."

"My lord," returned the lady, her clear voice ringing in the large stately room, "I will introduce myself to Mr Edgar Wade."

How curious is sympathy, with its twin sister, or its second self, antipathy! When Edgar Wade saw the lady standing by the Earl's side, "a presentation," as Mrs Preen would have called it, passed through him, and he saw there would, necessarily, be some antagonism. On her side, Winifred

thought there was a certain cause for caution, and she experienced an undefined nervous agitation. Her hair, as the French would say, "dressed itself on her head," and her voice became deeper, and somewhat more unmanageable.

To say the truth, all very strong emotion was with Winifred unmanageable. She was a creature of impulse, and of very admirable and true impulses, too. It is only those cold and calculating people, who do not know the power and truth which reside in impulse, who are so ready to blame it.

This deep, rich, unmanageable voice then said, seeming strange even to Winifred herself—

"I will introduce myself to Mr Edgar Wade. I am the wife of Philip Stanfield, whom he would dispossess. I am the Viscountess Wimpole!"

The histrionic feeling which underlies all true passion—hence, when people understand deep emotion and passion, they understand good acting; when they are hypocrites, slight things, fribbles, and fools, they laugh at tragedy and sneer at Shakespeare—came out very strongly here. Mrs Siddons might well have studied the firm pose, the elevation of figure, and the honest assertion of her rights, that the lady conveyed by her manner. If he—her husband himself—and all that were around doubted of his rights, she did not.

Thus it often happens. Long after a man knows he is beaten, and has given himself over to the devil or to ill-luck, his friends believe in him, in his talent, his energy, his goodness; as the horse that will only reach the goal to lose the race, and who feels defeat in every flagging nerve, has, doubtless, his eager backers as he skims the turf and flees along the ground.

The Earl raised his head a little, and said—

"The lady asserts the truth. She is"—then he faltered—"the wife of my dear son—Philip!"

"Viscount Wimpole," said the lady, proudly.

She would not bate one jot of her rights. Poor little soul. If all had gone happily with her, and she had become suddenly the Countess of Chesterton, she would have hidden her coronet beneath the sofa-squab, and put rank out of sight. But when any one forcibly put away her due, she fought bravely

and tenaciously; would never know when she was beaten; and would die, but never surrender—as Cambronne ought to have said, but never did say, of the French Guards at Waterloo.

But this brave front did not seem to add anything like a corresponding bravery to the lady's father-in-law. Lord Chesterton watched Winifred with a troubled air; and Edgar Wade, having nothing really to say to his fair enemy, merely bowed, and remained awkwardly silent.

"My dear," said the Earl, "I think that Mr Edgar Wade will understand your position and"——

"I know so little of the family," said the barrister, stiffly, "that I was not aware that Lord Wimpole was married."

"The affair is quite recent," interrupted the Earl, still holding up his hand to Winifred, "or the world would have known."

He said this with his old air; and when the Earl of Chesterton spoke in that way, there was no one who would be bold enough to question him.

Edgar bowed again, and said—

"I can only congratulate his lordship."

The word seemed to carry with it a satire, marked by an inflection of the voice. There was a courtliness of manner as he spoke—and in those days people did not hesitate to pay direct compliments; but Winifred did not much relish the speech, and still looked at him defiantly.

"I am come here," added Edgar, "to see if I can be of service—of any service to his lordship, and to the Earl, his father."

"We know that, sir," returned Lord Chesterton; "and we are infinitely obliged to you. Lady Wimpole will perhaps retire, and then you and I can talk more freely over the sad misfortune which has befallen my son."

"I am here by your desire, my lord," said Edgar, firmly, "to defend him to the last effort of which I am capable."

Here Winifred again spoke, with still the same unmanageable voice, the same earnest feeling and defiant tone.

"You have congratulated me, sir," she said; "and I congratulate you upon your determination. In defending Philip, you defend an innocent gentleman, most wrongfully, most

wickedly accused. But look that you *do* defend him, Mr Edgar Wade. It was you that first brought misfortune and consternation into this house ; you it was who disturbed his happiness, and threw down his hopes of peaceful ease and honourable life. He has told me all. Unsuspicious and generous to a fault, he may admit your claim ; but I have another duty to perform. I am very weak, very young—I do not know the world ; but I hope I know something better and higher, and I trust in that God who will not see the innocent a prey to greedy ambition, nor entirely neglect those who have no resource but their prayers and tears."

And here the tears, unwillingly to Winifred, made themselves visible in those proud, honest eyes of hers. She suppressed them, however ; and, turning to the Earl, said—

" And now, my lord, I will leave you with Mr Edgar Wade. Pray be calm, and be hopeful. I am full of hope. This is but an ugly dream. I will remain in my husband's home. Summon me if I can help you at any time. While you are debating, I will go and pray."

Tenderly the old nobleman kissed his daughter's forehead ; tenderly he gave her to the custody of Mrs Preen, ordering that estimable lady to make ready—as if every room at Chesterton House was not always ready—the Countess's room and boudoir ; and then, closing the door, he stood with his back to it, torn with cruel recollections, and gazing at his son, Edgar Wade.

The young gentleman was somewhat startled at the apparition of Philip's wife. He knew that, in his profession, it was always better to fight a battle without any womanly encumbrance ; and he was not struck by any particular warmth in the reception which his father gave him.

Much as he knew of the world—and the barrister had had the education which low birth and iron fortune give a man—he had not got rid of his illusions. At thirty, few men have cast them away ; and egotism—or egoism, which is a better word—lies so close around the human heart, that he deemed, after making his discovery, that the Earl would have welcomed him as a long-lost son. He forgot how unwelcome to Lord Chesterton the appearance of that son was, and that the baby

was only dealt with as a ready implement to make the fortune of his other son. He imagined—with that latent belief in the triumph of truth and right which even bad men, not to speak of good men, always have—that the Earl would have hastened to make apparent a righted wrong; that the pretender would march out, and that the true heir would have marched in. Was he very simple? Do not we all flatter ourselves that our own fortune will be an exception to that of others? Does it not require a great deal of beating to make the sanguine and the vain-glorious know that they are beaten? So dull are we as to other persons' feelings toward us, that we are surprised when we discover that we have enemies, and that anybody can dislike us.

The old nobleman stood for some time looking at his son, and Edgar stood opposite him, returning that look. At last, the elder of the two spoke.

"Well, sir"—the old man's voice trembled—"you see the beginning of the end of a sad history. The world knows nothing as yet"—

"And shall know nothing, my lord—or little," said Edgar Wade, eagerly and fiercely. "Why should it know? All this that has passed, *is past.* It is ours. We can keep it here."

He clenched his hand and tapped his breast as he said this.

The Earl waved his two hands before his face quickly, as if to dispel some cloud that dulled his sight.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "I thought you were a man of law—a man of the world. The world will be sure to know; and, if it does not know, will talk and talk, will gibber and mow, and make mouths at ancient houses. I have done with secrets. Let it know all. The thing began in love, and ends in blood. A pretty beginning, and a sad ending; but common enough—common enough."

Then he paused, and seemed to grow more weak and undecided; when, again summoning up something of his old self, he cried, petulantly—

"But you must prove all you assert. How do I know that you are what you say you are? You cannot carry our house by assault. Philip has been weak. He should have had me by his side."

"My lord—my lord!" returned Edgar Wade, in a stately manner—"this is not worthy of your lordship, nor worthy of your son, my brother Philip."

There was so much feeling in these words, that the old nobleman was touched, and came forward more humbly than before ; and, pointing to a chair for his companion, sat down.

"I am, I hope," said Edgar Wade, "a gentleman. Your lordship's iron will, in dispossessing me for so long of my rights, could at least have no effect upon those instinctive feelings which—perverted, it may be, in you—were still the inheritance of my race. There are men, I hope, and many, who, whatever misfortunes they may be subjected to, are yet gentlemen by instinct, in spite of low surroundings and adverse fortune."

"I am not unaware of the second, and far worse, misfortune which has befallen our house. Our house," murmured the old Earl, repeating the words. "Yes, our house."

"Hurried, possibly—as I have heard suggested by one who is an adept in such cases"—

The old Earl forgot at once what he had said about letting the world know all. We are so very brave before the worst comes to the worst!

"You have not been talking, sir," he cried, angrily, "of the misfortunes of our family? People will know it soon enough, without hearing it from one who professes to defend it."

"But, in order to defend it," returned Edgar, with dignity, "I must know thoroughly all that it is accused of. I have been speaking only with him who knows—and who, indeed, planned—the arrest of your *other* son."

"My other son—poor Philip!"

The wits of the Earl—confused with his own guilt ; the trouble of his son's wife ; the guilt, as he firmly believed, of his son ; and the Gordian knot of misery which was around them all—seemed to be trembling. He stretched out his hands, as if for help. Edgar caught them ; and, pressing them to his breast, knelt at his feet.

"My father!—my poor father!" he said, "trust in me. Believe me, I am your son!"

"You are not my Philip," returned the Earl.

And then he looked at him more fondly; noticed his dark, eager eyes; his broad brow; the lines of anxiety and care; and in his breast there came the flutterings of a long-banished affection. Paternal love is a great mystery to most men. Some banish it altogether; many seem never to have any; with others, it is as strong as a passion, and makes them as weak. The Earl had poured all his, it would seem, into one current; but now the time came when nature would assert herself, and require some amends to be made for past cruelty.

"You are my son; and, if all be true, my heir; entitled, after myself, to all the state and honour of the Chestertons," murmured the old man, "of which I have sought to dispossess you."

"Speak not of it, my father," said Edgar. "If I retain my rights, all shall be forgotten. Are we not all weak and fallible? Have we not each of us something to ask forgiveness for?"

He passed his hands again over those weary eyes, and pressed upon them, as if he would keep back the past.

"I have been cruel to you, to be kind to him," babbled the Earl in his grief, his heart opening as he spoke; "and see how Providence has punished me! I would have died to save him. I became guilty to dower him in this life, only with power, place, a career for his talents and his ambition; and—cruelly mocking my state, grinning at my feeble power—Time comes, and strips my plottings bare, and dyes my Philip's hands in blood." Then the sacred story of the Son of David's love came back upon the old nobleman, and he cried, "'O Absalom!—my son, my son!'"

The Earl's head was bowed, and tears—unwonted tears—again trickled down his cheeks. Edgar Wade had risen, and regarded him curiously. "This man," he thought, "will never love me."

But presently, while he was yet a victim to sad thoughts, the old nobleman startled him by saying—

"The worst has happened. You are sure of those letters? Indeed, I need not ask—they were mine. The plot was mine; the guilt was mine—and the punishment. He must not *die.*"

"He shall not," said Edgar. "We will save our house that.

The law has many ways and many chances; and, although the eyes of the world may be on us, we will save the family that shame. But we must begin early."

Save the family—not Philip! Apparently the answer satisfied the Earl, for he grasped Edgar's hands with much fervour.

"We will work together. I have been unjust to you. This taint will cover Philip for ever; it is but right. Had he—poor, unhappy boy!—But now our family must acknowledge its rightful heir."

And then the Earl, changing to another phase of thought, said—

"Your education has not been neglected, I presume, although I never heard from Mrs Wade, with whom you were *placed*."

"His lordship knows how to use his words," thought Edgar.

"You can ride?"

"I am a good horseman, your lordship," answered Edgar, with a smile.

"Shoot, fence, box?"

"Those accomplishments are not unknown to me."

"And you are very well known at the Bar. Umph!—legal knowledge will be useful in the House. We have hard times yet to come upon us, *nous autres*—we whose position others envy."

Then, again, suddenly he turned upon him—

"And Philip—you can put yourself in his place? You want to know all, *if* you defend him; but I should advise you to leave it to others."

"So my old friend told me—I say old friend merely as a mode of speech. He told me to leave it to older heads and cooler hearts than mine."

"A good phrase; a wise man that. Yes, the king is dead—long live the king! Poor Philip!—his desperate move has cost him all the game. You believe him guilty, I think you said?"

Edgar bowed his head, and answered as he had replied to Old Forster—

"My lord, I believe nothing. My mind is, as regards that, a blank. He must be defended."

"Ah!" said the old man, with a sigh, staring vaguely at the portrait of some bygone earl, who, in his ermine-trimmed robe, and his knee advanced on a footstool to show the Garter, pointed forward with some Bill of Rights or petition in his hand, as if it were a field marshal's bâton. "Ah! I wonder, now, if our ermine was often stained with blood in the olden time."

Then suddenly he arose, as if frightened by shadows.

"Come here, into his room—it may be yours soon—and let us plan the campaign for his relief."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A VERY SUCCESSFUL BENEFIT.

THE benefit of Mdlle. Natalie Fifine was more properly a "bespeak," got up by the young lady in order to aid the funds of the Fifine family. The old bookseller on the Quai du Temple had heard of a good stroke of business to be done, and Natalie, as we know, was nothing loath to help him. A new operatic star was about to make her appearance, and a new ballet was to follow, in which the twinkling feet of Natalie were to appear.

The young lady, therefore, sought the fat and podgy Mr Dunn, the manager, who, in his faultless black suit, his white shirt, and new beaver hat—gentlemen did not in those days dream of wearing silk—looked like a ball of black satin standing at his own box door.

"Good morning, Mr Dunn," said Natalie. "You are charmant, fine 'ealth, this morning."

"Quite so, m'am-zelle, quite so," said Mr Dunn, looking far away beyond and over the humble *employée* of his operatic troop.

It is curious how grand the manager can be to the artist; *almost* as curious as it is how subservient those great creatures, the artists, can be to the manager. An ordinary English workman shows about a dozen times as much independence

as one of these God-gifted geniuses, except when the genius is up in the saddle; and then, indeed, he or she takes it out of the manager.

"I want to zpeak to you, Monsieur Dunn, about money."

"That's very shortly disposed of, then," said Dunn, brusquely. "I ain't got none. Treasury's pretty nigh empty. And besides"—here he recalled his glances from the far-distant Coventry Street—"you don't draw as you ought, Fifine; you know you don't."

Even in those remote and dark days, managers were so advanced towards the great future claimed for women by Miss Becker and Lady Amberley, that they called their female artistes directly by their surnames. "I sez to Siddons, sez I," one would ejaculate; or "S'help me Moses, Jordan, you can lick the 'ead off some o' them hactors in a coat and breeches part." Similar elegances put all the lady artistes on a pleasing equality with the male sex. And this admirable and advanced state of matters actually exists between the artists themselves. Ladies call each other Belville or Montagu; and gentlemen, when on terms of familiarity, assure little Belville that she "spoke her lengths prime!" or whisper to Miss Montagu, in flattering terms, "I say, Montagu, by the holy poker, you topped that part like a rum 'un."

So it happened that Mr Dunn was quite *en règle* when he reiterated, "You don't draw, Fifine, as you ought."

"But," added the lady, "money, Mr Dunn, money."

"Well, I can't give you none," said the manager. "The ghost don't walk till Friday."

Thus, in theatrical phrase, the polite manager intimated that Friday was the pay day; and that, until that day, no part of Natalie's salary could be advanced.

"Oh, you funny little man," said the lady. "I mean, bringing money to you."

This was quite another aspect of the question, and Mr Dunn ceased to look up the Haymarket; and bringing his twinkling little eyes to the level of the actress's face, said—

"What's up now?"

Hereupon the artless Natalie proposed her plan; which was that she should advertise a benefit, and get as many of her

admirers as she could into the house, selling the tickets herself, and paying half the proceeds into the treasury.

This was quite a legitimate proceeding; and as Mr Dunn had been more than once accused of selling pass-keys to old and young gentlemen—patrons of the art, of course—so that they could study both the art and the artistes behind the scenes, it is not to be wondered at if he at once acceded. Miss Natalie was prepared with her list of names. There was the Viscount Montcastel, an Irish nobleman, who was clipping his estates in the prosecution of his histrionic studies; the Honourable Captain Poncho, of the Guards; Mr Edgar Wade, and other gentlemen upon whose patronage the *danseuse* could count; and the little Frenchwoman showed herself so quick at accounts, and so ready with her plan, that Mr Dunn looked at her with respect, and assured her, in gratifying terms, that "she was a clever little devil," and that she would rise in the world.

Upon this Natalie made a little *moue* at the manager, heaved a little sigh, which made Mr Dunn's eyes twinkle, and walked off towards Soho, to get her tickets printed.

As she went along, walking with a quick, active, graceful step, she caused the young bucks in Hessian boots, or trousers tight at the knees and loose over the instep of their Wellington boots, to look round at her. With that ready appreciation of beauty which all Englishmen pride themselves upon, some pronounced her "a high stepper," a "neat little filly;" and some said to their companions, "Egad, why that's a Fwenchwoman, Fwank," or "Fwedewick," as the case might be.

Meantime, on she went. The smile died out of her face; the bright eyes looked sadly through the beautiful mask; and she complained to herself that she was *morne* and *triste* in this detestable England. If she could get enough money only for the mother and the old father, she would be back, she said, to *La belle France*. Paris to her was Paradise: all other countries she looked upon as mere hunting grounds whereon she could pick up her beloved gold. Was she very different from others? Have not poets, statesmen, fiddlers, and buffoons, in this best of all possible worlds, the same object at heart as the beautiful Fifine?

The benefit plan succeeded admirably. Other artistes, who did not unite business tact with their histrionic talent, wondered why the little Frenchwoman should have a benefit. The manager was accused of favouritism. The press was known, by some people who know everything, to have been bribed. Underhand dealings were largely hinted at. One of the male artists—who were just as jealous of a lady labourer in the holy cause of amusing the British public as they were of one of their own sex—spoke in ambiguous terms of his knowledge "how the affair was done!" In the meantime, two or three judicious gifts of free tickets gained two or three paragraphs, in which the editor professed himself rejoiced to see that the very talented young lady would take her first benefit. And some of these gentlemen—whom, it is needless to say, were not the editors—prophesied that, from the array of talent called to her aid—the bills had not the addition of a single celebrity—the benefit would be a bumper.

Fifine's end was gained. Her name was printed prominently a dozen or so times; slips from the English papers were cut out and sent to Paris; and the friends whom she could rely on bought many of her tickets, and gave them away to their friends—friends who are always so glad to fill a house when they gain an entrance for nothing, and who go to see the dullest piece with a wonderful zeal, provided that it costs them no money.

Mr Dunn's new star—who, of course, had made her appearance at the San Carlo, and had created a *furore* at Paris, without which no singer, however great, can be expected to please the English public, which yet tenaciously believes that it depends upon its unbiased opinion—was a success; and Mdlle. Fifine's friends were delighted to find that they had paid their money for a real treat. Part of the splendour of the triumph was put down to her share; and the astute Mr Dunn, while he complimented the new Prima Donna, took credit for "backing" her up with a splendid ballet, and for packing the house, so as to insure a reception.

The Prima Donna—who happened to be a genius, and as simple as a child—took everything in good part, and told Mr Dunn that he was the prince of *entrepreneurs*.

The gentlemen in the stalls turned round to look at the house, to which they had paid more than enough attention during the progress of the opera. A first night is always more interesting —especially to critics—on account of the house than of the artists. Mr R. Coaster was there, in all the glory of his war paint—full dress, diamond studs, velvet collar, a white necktie big enough to bandage a broken leg with, snowy white shirt, cuffs which came down to the knuckles of his primrose-coloured gloves, a crush-hat, and hair in fragrant ringlets. Mr Rolt, who had two tickets at his disposal, had brought Mrs Rolt—a stout, fair lady, in cork-screw curls and a turban, *gigot* sleeves, and a straight dress. Mrs Rolt was one of those ladies who sighed her approval at everything—if such a term might be applied to a very strong expiration of breath—and who kept her very white, fat hands always occupied in caressing her fair, corkscrew curls.

"What a many of the aristocracy you do know, Thomas," she sighed. "Ah, it 's well to be you, engaged in these gay and festive scenes, while I am at home taking care of the babies!"

"My dear," said Mr Rolt—singling out a Duke, and kissing his hand to him, but taking care to do this while his Grace was looking away—"the Duke of Heathacre. How well his Grace is looking! How very kind of him to notice me!"

"I didn't see him, Thomas," said Mrs Rolt, with a sigh. "But, there, your poor eyes are not tried like mine are with fine work. The girls' frocks, Tom"——

"Bother the"——

Here Mr Rolt noticed another gentleman, Sir Paddington Buss.

"My dear," he said, "next to him is Tom Cabriolet, of the Guards. Both famous whips, and both subscribe to the paper."

"I wish they 'd subscribe a little more to my housekeeping," sighed poor Mrs Rolt. "There 's that boy, Tom, grown out of his trousers; and Susan 's always breaking something—one day it is the bedroom water-jug, and now what do you think it is?"

"Not my pet breakfast cup, I hope," said Rolt, eagerly.

"Well, that isn't gone yet," said the careful housewife; "but she's broken that well-dish you bought when Lord Fantasy gave you the haunch of venison."

Mr Rolt very nearly swore; but, heroically stifling the hasty word, he said—

"Hallo! there's Coaster there. How well he looks! and, by jingo! he is talking with that extraordinary old man, Tom Forster. Excuse me a minute, Mrs Rolt. Pray, keep yourself warm. I'll step aside, and talk with my friends. There, you see that old gentleman in the omnibus box—that's Lord Montcastel. I wonder what his lordship is after! He's a great patron of the drama. I wonder what the managers would do without him!"

Mr Rolt left his wife to look through her opera glasses at fine ladies whom she did not know, and to "tottle up" the probable cost of their dresses. Mrs Rolt was a great hand at figures. She had enough practice with poor Mr Rolt's accounts; for that hard-working gentleman was always just a "little behind," and had an immense struggle to keep abreast, or rather to try to get abreast, of the great world.

Mr Tom Forster, who was passionately fond of the opera—uniting, for a wonder, the taste for Shakespeare and the musical glasses—having been puzzled with his case, had given himself the rare treat of seeing and hearing the new Prima Donna. But that was not the only thing Mr Forster saw that night.

In the omnibus box, to his right, obsequiously bowed in by Mr Manager Dunn—as black and as glossy at night as in the morning—was my Lord Montcastel, an Irish nobleman of good estate, or that which had been a good estate; about forty years old, but looking much older: already bald, very tall, with a very big English-Irish face—that is, a face which united the worst qualities of the two races. He had the large teeth and the sandy whiskers of the Saxon, the high cheek bones and bushy eyebrows of the Celt; and he sat staring and blinking at the stage, with his small eyes just on a level with the gas footlights—then a somewhat recent introduction—and talking loudly to his companion, as if the whole theatre belonged to him.

"Good many people here," he said to his brother, the Hon.

and Rev. Peter Boor, a gaunt, tall, bony clergyman. "'Gad, the little girl 's been clever to whip 'em up."

"They don't come for *her*," said the clergyman, who seemed to know as much about the Opera House as he should have done about his parish. "It 's the new one; and she 's a success."

"Well, you ought to know, Peter," said his brother. "You are more about town than I am."

"I keep my eyes open," said the clergyman; "that 's what I do. Can you let me have any money, Dermot?"

"Not a rap, not a rap, Peter; all bad luck. I 've been into the City, and"—here his lordship drew a great sigh, for he was known to dabble in speculations of various sorts, and, it is needless to say, to lose by them—"I 've done no good. Don't talk about money, Peter. I hate the very name of it."

"I don't," said the reverend Peter, stoutly. "I get a precious deal too little of it to hate it. A man only hates that which he gets too familiar with."

"What long waits they have," said his lordship, with a yawn. "That curry was not bad at the Travellers'; but, I don't know how it is, curry always disagrees with me."

"You eat such a precious lot of it," said the clergyman.

And then the orchestra struck up; and Edgar Wade, who was not so far from the box but that he could hear every word his lordship said—for Lord Moncastel had a very powerful chest voice, deep and resonant—lost something that was said about "the little one;" something such as, "We shall have the little one on soon."

His lordship had a suspicious-looking bouquet on the cushions of his box, next to a double-barrelled opera glass, all pearl and gold, with a long gold handle which could be folded up when put into the case, the end of which handle his lordship held daintily between his big finger and thumb, and thus raised the heavy glasses with as much ease as a dandy would have lifted a double eye-glass. Seeing that Edgar Wade looked at him, Lord Montcastel proceeded coolly to take the measure of the barrister, and to stare him down.

The calm, cool, aristocratic insolence, as Edgar felt it to be, made the barrister turn the other way, and enabled Mr Tom

Forster to make certain of a fact of which he had been hitherto only suspicious. There, surely enough, was his favourite *protégé;* and there, too, in his hand, was the very bouquet which Old Daylight had fancied was intended for his sick *mother*, Mrs Wade.

"Well, well," said the old gentleman, with a sigh; "why should not the young man enjoy himself? I suppose I am growing old and cantankerous."

"Mr Forster, sir! How do you do?" It was Mr Rolt, who had taken a seat near him. "You got my paper, sir? I made mention of you, sir. No names; but pretty well done, sir—not to be mistaken."

"Thank you for your intention; but I 'd rather be without it. Wait till the end."

"Grows more ungenerous every day. I say"—here Mr Rolt whispered—"they do say so; and I don't see the Earl here, nor his son!"

"P'raps not fond of the opera; p'raps they like to stay at home. Hush!"

The band ceased, the bell rang—up went the curtain. The orchestra played the liveliest dance music, the Star of the Ballet spun across the stage in three bounds, and the chief fiddlers and solo players bolted away through a little door under the stage, and thence to their virtuous homes.

A torrent of applause! Mr Rolt, who was constrained to keep his seat away from his excellent wife, split his gloves with the heartiness of his *claque;* a good round dozen of foreign gentlemen in the pit stimulated others, and threw in their united artillery in the most artistic way. Edgar Wade was in raptures; and Lord Montcastel said "Bravo! bravo!" in so loud a voice that everybody heard him, and the followers of that nobleman said "*Bravissima!*" Mr Tom Forster, who was not of the initiated, looked up and saw a little, bright actress—not much of a dancer, to be sure, but pert, *espiegle*, arch, and active—who flew about the stage, placed herself in artistic and entrancing *poses;* and who, in retiring on the tips of her toes, kissed the tips of her gloved fingers at the whole house, and yet managed to convey to Edgar Wade and Viscount Montcastel that each had an especial share in such fairy osculation.

The ballet went on, and the Star paled before Fifine, who had not an ace of her merit. At its end, a half-dozen bouquets skilfully thrown—except that of Edgar Wade, which knocked off a footlight glass—rewarded Natalie Fifine; who, with the prettiest and most reluctant modesty, took them up, and offered half of them to the dancer she had eclipsed. The English love generosity, and applauded Natalie all the more.

"Certainly," said Mr Rolt; "you do me proud. I shall be happy to pass you behind, sir, as you 're a friend of Mr Dunn's." Edgar had indulged in a fib. "Come this way. Mrs Rolt will remain in the crush-room."

From the blaze of light—the intense enjoyment of seeing the triumph of the one being whom he loved—to the bare, gaunt boards and skeletons of forests at the wings and the backs of scenes, to passages draughty with foul air and redolent of gas, the young man went. He had been some time in this passage: Natalie was already shawled, and her maid was with her. Edgar saw no one else.

"O Natalie!" he whispered to her, pressing her hand; "how beautiful you are! Let me take you home, and tell you of your triumph. I have a carriage here."

"Sorry to anticipate you, I am shaw," said the tall Irish Viscount. "We have been before you—I and this gentleman. Haven 't we, Peter? Ma'm'selle will accompany us; will do us the honour—umph!"

The world seemed to be suddenly dark—black to Edgar; and out of this darkness a little, simple voice uttered—

"Adieu, *mon ami*—I must accompany *melor!*"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OFF TO LONDON.

Mr Charley Folaire—finding that the Ship had its crew, and rather above its full complement—moved to the Antwerp Hotel, in Dover, kept by an excellent host, Mr Chittenden; and was delighted with his success in business. Presently, to him entered Mr Jem Sparks, a bagman of the old school, with

an equally red face, but turned up with black. Mr Sparks had black eyebrows, black whiskers, and hair worn *à la* Brutus —that is, in rough, short curls on the top of his forehead, cut short behind, but left curling over his ears crisply and thoroughly. This fashion was taken from the old Roman way, which may be seen upon busts and statues, where the black hair in white marble looks—although undoubtedly classical—like a number of unshelled periwinkles struggling in soapsuds.

Directly the two knights of the road saw each other, they burst into a roar of laughter. Charley's red face and red hair seemed aflame with fun, success, and jollity; and Jem Sparks, although he was "done," as he said, thoroughly enjoyed the joke. When the laugh was over, Mr Folaire rang the bell, called for Mr Chittenden, and ordered another plate and another pint, and asked Mr Sparks to join him in an excellent dinner, consisting of a saddle of South Down mutton and a pheasant to follow; two or three little ground rice cup puddings, served up in sweet sauce, made of pear juice and currant jelly—a recipe peculiar to good Mrs Chittenden—being ordered to follow. A long journey, the sharp air, the consciousness of well-merited success on Folaire's part, and of having come in second best on that of Mr James Sparks, kept the two friends silent until they had finished dinner; when Mr Sparks, pushing away his plate with a sigh of gratitude, said—

"Ah, Charley, you are a sharp one! You know how to get up betimes of a morning."

"The early bird, you know," said Charley, bashfully; "couldn't have done it, though, unless it had been for that trump of a horse of mine, the Chief Baron!"

"Did you break his wind?" asked Mr Sharp, sarcastically.

"No; he ain't a roarer yet! Not like your black mare, Jem; and she's a good one."

While the two friends are discussing the brightness of the wine, its body, and excellence, the story must return to the sea wall at Dover Harbour, where, not far from the Ship, some four or five persons were gathered, and were talking.

These were Mr Brownjohn, César Negretti, Patsy Quelch, and Le Père Martin; while leaning over the gunwale of the French-built fishing-smack was Captain Martin's crew, boat-

swain, petty officer, captain of Marines, and first lieutenant all in one, M. Jules Simon, a French sea-wolf, as he called himself, with the head of a cod-fish, a dull eye, hands covered with bark instead of skin, and a brain and head slow, but honest. To his dull apprehension, the whole matter was one of smuggling; and this also, to that peculiarly constituted brain, was a merit rather than a fault. Jules Simon stuck close to his boat, feeling safer on his native element—and, indeed, he had been born on the sea—than on land, especially when such little difficulties as that before him was taking place.

The Père Martin comforted him in a manly manner, telling him to take the boat over to Boulogne, and to stay there; that he would be back in a week, and that there was no matter; for the English men of the law were good, honest people. To which M. Jules assented, without the slightest ray of intelligence upon his marine face. He took it all in, however; and, as the Père knew, would be sure to execute his trust. Then the old fellow turned round, and with that innocent and transparent smile which is so very beautiful to see, and so easy to assume, he asked Mr Brownjohn whether he would take his boat, too?—if he wished to arrest the light and buoyant *Estelle?*

"No," said the Bow Street runner. "No, I don't want that. You did not take that up to London. Stop!" he said, after a few moments' reflection, in his slow way. "Stop! I think young Master Squelch there"——

"Patsy Quelch, please, sir," said the boy, who kept his eye fixed on the police-officer, as a drummer might have done on a general.

"Well, Mr Quilch, then," continued Brownjohn, as if determined not to get the boy's name right. "Will you step into that boat there, and go and look into the cabin, and hand out Cap'en Martin's traps? And, I say, look and see whether you see any likely things there."

Dull as he was, Brownjohn knew his instruments in a moment. He had his hands full. There was that murderous, innocent humbug, old Martin, who would call himself and the subject in hand Mar*ton*—("Dash it," said Brownjohn, afterwards, "why *will* they do that? Why can't they talk like

Crist'en folk and Englishers?")—then there was Mr César Negretti, who might slip off at any time, and who was wanted as a witness in London, to prove Mr Martin's identity, and to find out various matters. About him, too, Brownjohn had doubts, and Patsy's caution—"Just look in that there bundle of his, and see what he has got there"—still rang in his ears.

He had acted upon it so far as cleverly to twitch the bundle out of César's hands, and to slip his brawny arm through its loops; but he could not for a moment suppose that any result but some pilfered garment or cup from the Hôtel des Etrangères might be found there.

César's face, when he saw Patsy, was a caution to see. He had been haunted, as men will be when they have committed a folly, with a dull presentiment of detection; but it had never made itself so apparent as to give him any uneasiness. It was a presentiment, like others, only to be read by the light of after-events, and by César to be cursed right soundly for not coming before him in a more unquestionable shape. César had one of those bright, sharp, active, and complete intellects that never blamed itself. Let whoever else be in the wrong, he did not want to be so.

"Ah!" he sighed, "that fool of an idea; why did it not come plain? I saw this boy, this urchin, this ghost, this *squelette*, come after me—in my dream, was it, or when I was awake?"

Then his Italian quickness came like a flash upon him, and his eyes looked like two glowing coals, with every now and then a green flash coming over them, as he poured forth a torrent of abuse at the young Celt, and ended by winding up nearly a dozen of epithets by call him a "devil's pig."

The little Irish boy—for our excellent Irish compatriots can be abusive themselves—stood all this; but he felt it all, and the last name stuck in his throat. Brownjohn saw that, and interposed to save the boy.

"I say, you Negretti," he said, "keep a civil tongue in your head. The boy hain't done you no harm. I should have taken you up to London, as it was. I told you I'd pinch you, Negretti, and I will. I've marked you, my man, although I am a fool, and I don't understand foreign lingo."

Hereupon César's face brightened up; his hair returned to its former position on his head; he no longer permitted his face to wear that sharp, angular expression, but smiled with a softness and roundness of feature that was really charming to see. He looked so youthful, so good-natured, and so innocent, that Père Martin smiled back in his innocent way at him, as if the two foreigners understood each other.

"My Brownjohn," he said, in a most affectionate manner, showing his white teeth, shrugging his shoulders, and using a dozen expressive symbols with his mouth, chin, and hands, such as no Englishman, even if he be an accomplished actor, can command; "My Brownjohn! If I had known that? Why did you not speak? Am I not born to serve you? Does not my heart go out to you?"

"I know nothing about your heart," said the Bow Street runner, who always felt at a discount with foreigners, and especially with one who, like Negretti, could, as he phrased it, "get up anybody's sleeve," "but I know, Mr César, that you've had your tongue in your cheek pretty often at me. However, that's neither here nor there. You will come with me."

"Of course, with the greatest pleasure. It was only a foolish fancy of mine to visit my native country and its sunny skies, and this old gentleman's boat would have afforded me a passage. Would it not, sir?"

"You have stepped aboard it many a time, my child," said Père Martin, in his innocent, dreamy voice. Then he sighed. "But what *le bon Dieu* wishes, we must do." Here he crossed himself piously, and looked up to the lowering autumn sky.

César caught the infection, and followed suit with unction. Brownjohn felt that the two were too much for him, and wished to get out of it. He felt in his pocket for his pistol; for piety, as he observed to his friends, always put him on his guard.

"What," he asked, "do they do it for? Ain't they got churches to cross themselves in, and priests to listen to? Why do they go bewitching a police officer with their vanities?"

"Adieu, therefore, *La belle France*," continued César, making a sign of affectionate farewell towards Jules Simon, who, with

barky fingers, was gripping the sea wall, and heaving to and fro as the dull tide of the harbour rocked the boat under him. Adieu, *La belle Estelle*—that's the name of thy boat, friend Martin?"

"Yes; it was *her* name too," answered the Frenchman, innocently and naturally. "I can tell thee all, Mr Officer. You detain me here for no purpose."

"Oh, I won't detain you long. You come up with me by the night coach. And as for telling me, I warn you"——

"Ah, that is right, my Brownjohn. These English officers," said Negretti, in a warning voice, "are the soul of honour. They do not question and trouble a poor prisoner. I have had some experience of that—have I not, my Brownjohn?"

"That you have, Negretti. You've got nothing to say to me, Mr Mar*ton*, if that's your name. I've spotted you for this murder, and all my business is to hold you tight until I deliver you up—dead or alive, mind you—to a justice of the peace. That means a magistrate—you may not understand that in your French lingo."

"*Un magistrât, oui*," said the old man, nodding pleasantly. "Yes, I understand. I speak English very well, so does Estelle. We have lived with much English on the coast there."

"Very good; then you come along with me—peaceably, you know, or I call in another officer."

"What for? *Mon Dieu!* a poor old man like me. I will go very willingly. What God wishes, look you, He will do."

"Generally, He does it," said Brownjohn, piously, as if there might be exceptions. "Well, I never make any hard terms with my clients; and so, if you like to come as far as the Ship, we can take a snack in comfort. *You* won't want the darbies?"

He rattled, as he spoke, handcuffs in his pockets.

"Ah, no!" said the old man, blushing. "I have been a soldier in the Marine. I will obey."

The frank look of the old man mollified Brownjohn, who knew that he ran no danger; and who would have tackled, if called upon to do so, half a dozen foreigners.

"And I will help you, my Brownjohn," said César.

"Umph!" grunted the police officer. "Now, boy, look alive."

Patsy jumped into the boat with alacrity, searched every cranny, and brought out Père Martin's clothes, which he deftly wrapped up in a little bundle. He was not hindered by the fish-like Jules Simon, who looked, saw, heard, and said nothing —constrained to be quiet by a sign from his captain. Then, when all was ready, Brownjohn put César and Père Martin arm-in-arm before him, as if they were going out for a walk, and he and Patsy followed after; and behind the little procession rose a grunt—half sigh, half perplexity—from the marine animal, Jules Simon, of "Bon soir, mon maître." His rough dialect made the words sound like "bon baître!" and to this he added, with a dull sigh, "Shall I ever see thee more?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"AND, SINCE 'TIS HARD TO CONQUER, LEARNS TO FLY."

A BACHELOR'S room is always indicative of the bachelor, and some are not pleasant chambers to enter; for the selfishness of man, very apparent in most things, is most so in his inconsiderateness to those who serve him. Waistcoats and coats thrown there, boots and slippers here; braces in one corner, cravats, towels, and shirts in another; in short, a general untidiness distinguishes the bedroom, and the sitting-room is equally untended.

Philip's sanctum was a model of careful cleanliness and neatness. There was a place for everything, and everything was in its place.

"These great people," said Edgar to himself, "know how to take care of themselves, and to make their servants work."

Lord Chesterton drew a chair near the fire, and sat down, as if he were cold and needed comfort; and the barrister, carefully—and even somewhat ostentatiously—waiting to be asked, sat opposite to him.

"You see," said the Earl, "that I at once open my heart to you, and take you into my counsels. Fortune—or, it may be, Providence itself—has placed the secret of my life in your

hands; and, following this blow, has deprived me of him with whom I should take counsel. Do you know upon what evidence this crime has been traced to him!"

Thus adjured to be, as it were, a witness against his own brother, the barrister, with many apologies—and with, indeed, a distinct and repeated avowal that he held his own opinion in a state of solution—gave a very clear history of the case, which he had learnt from Mr Tom Forster and other sources.

At every point he paused, reviewed his ground, proceeded more cautiously, defended Philip, showed the improbability and the uselessness of the crime. But at the next stage he carried the evidence further on; and Tom Forster himself would have admired the clear summing-up of Mr Edgar Wade; and all the more because, in spite of every well-turned excuse, it told heavily against the accused.

The poor old Earl sighed heavily. The story tallied too well with his suspicions. He had already arrived at a foregone conclusion; and, when Edgar came to the end of his story, he merely looked up, and vacantly stared at the bright wax candles, which had burnt down low, and without a movement of their flames, hardly seeming the living things that flames are.

"Well," sighed his lordship, "and what then?"

"That is all. I have it from the chief authority. It is for you to draw your own conclusions."

"Logic is cruel, very cruel," said Lord Chesterton. "To what conclusion can I come?"

"I forbear to say any more," said the barrister, throwing down a folded letter which he had taken up—as barristers are wont to do—as much as to say, "That's my case, my lud and gentlemen of the jury. I leave myself in your hands."

"His wife is ready to swear—and who can disbelieve her?—that during the very hours the woman was *stricken down*"—both of these gentlemen avoided the word *murdered*—"Philip was with her in her chamber."

"Wives will proverbially, my lord," said the barrister, "swear anything to excuse their guilty husbands. How long has his lordship been married?"

"Not very long—I hardly know, indeed," said his lordship,

confusedly. "Events have followed each other so quickly that"——

"Your lordship has forgotten?"

"Oh no!" here the Earl spoke with the ingenuousness of a simple-minded man. "My son did not see fit to tell me of his marriage."

"Umph!" said Edgar Wade, his face lowering; "then it was a secret match. Had your lordship given him any cause for this decep— this secrecy?"

"No—poor boy!" said the Earl, reflecting, and seeking for an excuse, but not finding one. "You know, he is of mature age; and perhaps it was his wife's secret, after all. Young ladies are very curious and very bashful."

"Not in the matter of publishing their marriage," said Edgar, thoughtfully. "No, that must have been Philip's own doing. *I* should not have treated my honoured father so. But there, *I* never knew the comfort of one; and so I am speaking of an ideal—a very different thing from the real."

These sentences cut Lord Chesterton to the quick, in more ways than one. He had himself felt Philip's reticence, and had sought to excuse it to himself; Edgar, therefore, only freshly pointed the Earl's own arrows. The reproach, which was well deserved, of Edgar Wade's fatherless state he also deeply felt.

"But, after all," said Lord Chesterton, "I don't think, in Philip's present condition, that we will discuss that matter."

"Quite right; you are quite right," returned the barrister, in his frank, open way; "and I can appreciate your lordship's great goodness and great delicacy to my brother; but, as we are about to defend him, we should be armed at all points. I want to know what can be urged *against* him. What there is to be said in his favour—trust me, my lord—I can say at the proper time and place."

This was uttered with so much true dignity and feeling, that the Earl felt convinced that all that had been said was for the best.

"I must own," continued the Earl, speaking slowly, "that this secret marriage seems to argue that there might be other things that Philip kept from me. But that is the only one thing which he has, to my knowledge, thought proper not to tell his father."

"You have said enough, my lord. We will not discuss my brother's character: it is full of noble qualities, I am sure. We will let matters rest there. I have every faith not only in his goodness, but—from his bearing with me on a certain memorable occasion—in his chivalry, his nobleness, his disregard of self. But this marriage, instead of simplifying, complicates matters: there are other interests than his involved. He takes counsel of his wife, he"——

"You don't mean to say, sir," cried the nobleman, angrily rising, and looking at his son with flashing eyes, "that you would make that innocent girl, Winifred, an accessory to"——

"Pardon me, my lord, I am shocked at what you say. You put a meaning upon my words that they really do not bear. All that I want *you* to consider and remember is, that everything said here is between ourselves."

Here the barrister walked gently to the door and listened, looking out into the corridor.

"Your precautions are needless, sir. My people are honourable, and do not pry into their master's business."

"I could expect no less; but caution is necessary. Everything here, then, being a secret between our two selves, and to be divulged to no third party, we debate the best way to save my dear brother Philip. Thus debating, we come upon a very vital point. Is this story of his absence from—what do you call the place?"

"Kensal-Green," said the Earl.

"From Kensal-Green—is that to be believed? There is a credible witness whose oath, according to English law, is of no use. Yet I think we might produce an affidavit of hers to that effect, which would carry weight with the jury, who are sometimes more influenced by side-blows than by direct appeals.

"Good!" said the Earl. "I see that."

"But then my learned brother comes and tears this to shreds, by showing that Philip has married secretly—that Miss Winifred Vaughan has deceived her guardian—Lady Stark, is not that her name?—and the irresistible conclusion is summed up in a line from 'Othello'—

'She has deceived her father, and may thee!'"

The Earl nodded a sorrowful acquiescence.

"I don't think we should take the case into court that way," continued the barrister, speaking professionally. "No—I really think there would be by far too great a risk."

Here he rose, and commenced walking about the room.

"My suggestion, which you turned in so cruel a way against poor Philip's wife," he continued—and he said this with such pointed severity, that the Earl felt quite ashamed of himself—"was this: not that Philip's wife had consciously, even in the remotest way, anything to do with the affair we are so troubled with; but that he, full of love for her, strengthened by her belief in his case—a belief very strong, because based upon entire ignorance"——

"You are a deep philosopher, sir," said the admiring Earl, who was watching his son closely and curiously.

"As deep as neglect and misfortune can make me," retorted Edgar, again touching the Earl as if with caustic. "But be that as it may, a wife has a thousand ways of influencing her husband that the outside world knows nothing of; and a man truly and strongly in love does not debate the crime, but goes forward, and, having stricken the blow—as a knight in a tournament—crowns the brows of her whom he loves with glory, not with guilt. Do you see my position now, my lord?"

The form of the barrister seemed taller and dilated. His brow flushed, and his eyes flashed fire, as he talked of love.

The Earl was convinced. He rose and clasped Edgar to his breast.

"I see," he said, "that you are wiser than I am. If you young ones have lost something of the direct ways of former times, you are more acute in this world's doings."

"Possibly," returned Edgar, in a dry tone. "But, again, to return to our business in hand. Following out the line of thought which I have rather indicated than fully sketched, do you think that Miss Winifred Vaughan—Philip's wife, I mean—is to be believed? That is," concluded the barrister, ingeniously correcting himself, "do you think that a jury would believe her evidence, even if we could get the judge to accept it?"

The Earl waved his hands backwards and forwards, as if there were a hopeless and unpleasant fog of the mind settling down upon him. Men who jump to conclusions and embrace

fixed beliefs have frequently a quantity of latent doubt about them which overbalances the belief; and this was powerful with the Earl.

The barrister sat and watched him silently, but not the less closely. Presently he read his mind, or thought he did, for he said—

"You think as I do, my lord."

"I do. I am forced to do so, my son," returned Lord Chesterton, sadly.

Eagerly the barrister rose, and grasped his hand; and then, raising it to his lips, he kissed it.

"This matter is not new to me, my lord," he said. "My mind is quick, and I have thought day and night—day and night," he repeated, to give emphasis to what he was saying, "upon it. We will defend Philip with our heart, with our blood, with our souls!"

"Generous enthusiasm," thought the Earl, in his older and less hopeful mood. "It is easy to speak like that," he said, "but not so easy to stir the cold blood of the English law. What can the enthusiasm of a brother's or of a father's love do against that?"

"Your power is great," continued Edgar. "Your rent-roll is large, and untouched; your purse can buy anything almost in this vendible country."

"All but the verdict of a jury," said the Earl, with a sad smile. "A dozen of the cleverest counsel, the most profound lawyers, the wisest advisers"——

"It is *beyond* them, my lord," said Edgar; "beyond them, I am afraid. I have looked into matters pretty closely, while others have slept. I see no way out of it for my brother, *if* he is tried."

"If he is tried! Why, man, can he help it?"

"There are a thousand ways. He is not committed yet—he has only had a preliminary and private examination. Don't let it become public."

"Who can stop the babbling mouths of the press?" asked his lordship in dismay. "If they get hold of it in any way, they will not let us hear the last of it."

"And people," said Edgar, "are now clamouring for Reform,

which the House of Lords has withstood. Such a fact as the one we have debated would make the fortune of the lucky demagogue who first uses it against an hereditary aristocracy. No, my lord, we will not let the honour of the family be stained thus. Your money must be otherwise applied. The magistrate who has taken this in hand is"——

"Mr George Horton, an honourable man."

"So they are all honourable men," said Edgar, with a sneer. "But I think, with you, there's no hope *there*."

"No; I am sure not. Mr Horton will do his duty even against his own best interests. It was said that he was in love with, or had proposed to, Miss Vaughan. Indeed, I think that Lady Sark wrote me, in one of her gossiping letters, something of the sort."

"There might be some hope there," continued the barrister, dreamily looking out of his dark eyes at the candles without seeing them; seeing something far distant, in fact, and out of present ken. "She might bring to bear some influence even upon honourable men."

"I would not have her tried, sir," said the nobleman, angrily even. "Philip, I am sure, would rather die on the scaffold himself."

"All is fair in love and war—and law," urged the barrister, again speaking dreamily. "If Mr Boom, now, had been the magistrate, he might have been approached. He is such an eccentric old fellow—as honest as the day, no doubt, but"——

"For Heaven's sake, man!" cried Lord Chesterton, in impatience, "don't weigh to me the possibility of securing any connivance in guilt. We are not so fallen as that."

"Guilt makes us fall, my lord," said the barrister, "even to that. I have learnt that at the bar, and in enduring poverty which you, in your lofty station, could not understand, and would wonder at with a supreme phlegm. We are here placed —as many a poor creature is in a fever-stricken court—so close that we suffer the contagion ourselves. There is no hope else. Philip must fly the country."

"Good heavens! can it have come to that? Can you counsel so base"——

"Base or not base, it is the only thing that circumstances

can and will counsel. They are our great advisers. Listen to them. We must be schooled by circumstances. Who is not the creature of his surroundings, the victim of his friends and their follies, of his parents' sins?"

The deep, sad tone of the barrister, the measured cadence, the mockery of the satire, all bore in upon the Earl the sad strait to which he was reduced. He nodded his poor white head, as if in acquiescence, and rocked to and fro in his chair. The barrister saw that he had gained his point; and again Old Daylight's warning, "Stand on your own rights, Edgar Wade; do not parley with the Earl," seemed to be repeated in his ear. He hesitated for more than a moment—for many moments—while the pendulum of the clock upon the mantel ticked away the brief moments of the ambitious creature, man. He then spoke.

"And now, my lord," he said, "we have been occupied so entirely with my brother Philip's business, that we have entirely forgotten mine. What do you intend to do? Do you receive me as your son?"

"My son—ah! yes," muttered the Earl. "I was thinking of him—poor Philip. My son? There can be no doubt of that."

Then the Earl arose, and stood with one wax candle in his hand, shading the light from his own eyes, and reflecting the whole light upon the barrister's fine face—fine, clever, worn with many emotions. The Earl was endeavouring to call up the features of his wife; but, in truth, he had cared so little for her that he forgot, or had lost the power of recalling to his blurred memory, one trick of her countenance.

"He is like me," he murmured—"like that young portrait that hung in my father's room, and which he used to sneer at. Yes, he is my son."

"I am, indeed, my father," said the barrister, with love vibrating in his deep voice; "and I will prove it in my devotion and duty. You will acknowledge this publicly?"

"I have a great deal to do. I must sleep," said the old peer. "I have a trial to go through. I must see her who calls herself Mrs Wade."

The Earl's voice broke into a treble as he pronounced the name, and Edgar shuddered as he spoke.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"I BRING A MESSAGE FROM THE LAND OF SLEEP."

MRS PREEN, called suddenly to attend on a young lady in her master's house—that house which had not "slept" a young lady for some years, as the excellent Preen phrased it; no, not since my lady died—Mrs Preen, under this trial, tried to look as if she knew nothing about Winifred's marriage, and succeeded.

Succeeded wonderfully; for poor Winifred was so full of her own troubles that she hardly thought of anything else, and was only full of thanks for the kindly care of the housekeeper. Everything was ready. The boudoir of the Countess adjoined her bedchamber, and a bright fire burnt in it. There was an easy-chair covered with the warmest foreign chintz—very pretty, but very "subdued" in tone; so was the paper. The quiet, beautifully made, graceful furniture harmonised with all; for somehow, in the angular days of the Empire and Regency, there were upholsterers who could furnish with grace, and cabinetmakers who could turn out work that was by no means a sham, a delusion, and a snare.

The boudoir seemed to have reflected, after the manner of rooms, the tone of the mind of her who had inhabited it. The pictures were religious; the books were religious—and, alas! mournful. Sermons on the corruption of human nature, the sinfulness of man, the biography and evangelical experience of the Rev. Mr Newton, certain tracts by Toplady, and an Exposition by the Prophetic Keach, formed the cheering mental food upon which Lady Chesterton fed. The gentlemen who interpreted Revelation, and were great upon the breaking of the Seals, and the opening of the Vials, had opened the vials of their own wrath upon sinful man; and poor little Winifred—who took up a work with the attractive title of "A Stirring Summons from the Tenth Trumpet," by the author of "A Dose of Doctrine from Vial V."—almost forgot her trouble in the pictured horrors of lamentation, desolation, and woe. The

author appeared to be a favourite with certain classes, and fond of alliterative titles; for there were commendatory letters appended from certain ministers upon two "precious" treatises —"Physic for Pharisees," and "Senna for Sinners"—in which the minister had, it would seem, doctored his flock in a very efficient way, and his tracts had purged them of iniquity as quickly as any religious cathartic could have done.

Winifred—who used frequently to read her father's sermons, and those of the Divines of the Church which he had used and pointed out—wondered at the difference of treatment between those shepherds who endeavour to frighten sheep into their folds, and those who follow His method, whose sweet adjuration is the simple words, "Come unto Me."

Had the pious Mr Gurgles found out the treasury of works which formed the library of the late Countess, he, honest as he was, would have been tempted to have borrowed one of the "rousing" tracts which formed the holy marrow of the squab little volumes which, oddly enough, bore the coronet of the Countess and her initials in fat old English letters. For Mr Gurgles confessed that his soul was lethargic, and liked to be roused. He was delighted with anything stirring; and when his minister—a young man with the gloomy imagination of a Puritan Dante and the plain language of John Bunyan—pictured the recalcitrant members of his flock floating on waves of fire, and every now and then submerged, or left to save themselves upon rocks that glowed white-hot, like the hellish antitheses of mundane icebergs, Gurgles drew in his breath for joy.

To return to Winifred, who sat reading until she frightened herself out of her present grief; and then, throwing down her book, wondered at the mother whom Providence had provided for her Philip.

Curious, indeed, was it to consider the union of the courtly but worldly old gentleman, the Earl of Chesterton, and this pious lady; curious to reflect on the lady herself, whose ears had tingled with denunciations of the vanities of the world—of adjurations to "forsake all, and follow me"—still going onward, but loaded with her coronet, her title, her place, and her fashionable society. How would the Earl and Countess

have agreed in matters? It must have been a dull home, on the whole, for her Philip! Poor Philip!—whose right was now disputed, and who was so suddenly accused of a terrible crime.

Not for one moment did the thoughts of the young wife—occupied now and then with other matters, with her eyes roving over the pages of the Thundering Legion of divines—desert her husband, not for one moment did she believe him guilty. The accusation was a horrid nightmare which weighed upon her soul; but her faith in him was ever clear—to him her thoughts were ever loyal. She felt as if, sitting in the cosy, comfortable, and even luxurious boudoir of the late Countess—for that lady, while seeking the things of the other world, evidently had not disesteemed those of this—she was almost a denizen of a bygone age; and the curious body of divinity, so different in its tone, in its way of looking at things from that of her poor father, seemed to carry her farther back from herself.

A soft little knock at the door was heard; and, after due time, Mrs Preen entered, attended by a servant, who brought a tray with wine, a roast partridge, and other refreshments. Winifred had a healthy appetite in spite of her troubles; and having fasted nearly all day, was not sorry to refresh herself.

Mrs Preen was glad to see the pretty young lady eat and drink. She dismissed the servant, and waited on her herself. She was not unwilling to talk, and said that it put her in mind of old times, when she waited on the Countess, who frequently kept to her room for weeks, and saw little of the company of the Earl.

"Were they, then, not very happy?" was the question that escaped, almost involuntarily, from Winifred's lips. She was half sorry that she had asked it; but it did not in the least discompose the stately housekeeper, who smoothed her dress—so neat, without a speck or wrinkle—and answered—

"Happy! Oh, bless you! yes, my lady; as happy as a great lady ever is with her husband. There never was a word between them. I am sure that, on public occasions, and when company were present, it was a picture to see the attention and deference"—Mrs Preen said "*dif*-ference"—"my lord

paid my lady, and she looked up to him in the same way; only"——

"Only what?" asked Winifred; thinking, "If I am to be a great lady, I hope that is not the way Philip will treat me—politeness in company; coldness, or at least coolness, at home."

"Only, perhaps, I should not say it. I hope I give no offence."

Winifred assured her that she did not.

"Only people of rank are very different from middle-class people. They don't look for much connubiality. Now, my respected father and mother—my father was in the profession of the law, my lady, a very honourable profession—were quite patterns of domestic peace and enjoyment. Father always asked my dear mother's advice on his difficult cases."

Which was quite true, Mrs Preen's mother having early acquired a good legal round hand, and being ready to help her gallant law stationer at a pinch.

Winifred gave Mrs Preen an admiring look, as if some of the glory of the "connubiality" still rested on the daughter of the fond couple. For is not the great ambition of a young wife always that of being fondly loved, of being taken into the counsel of her lord? And does she not always admire those ladies who are so taken?

"They must have been a very nice"— she was going to say couple, but instinctively turned the phrase into a better word —"a very nice lady and gentleman, I am sure, madam."

Mrs Preen blushed with pardonable pleasure; and Winifred, by that word, won her heart for ever.

"They was that, my lady," said the matron, "and as fond as fond could be. But, you see, my lord and the Countess went different ways. He was taken up with politics and his duties, and she took to religion ever so strongly. Those are all her books; and, though my lord never read one of them, he would not have one touched for the world—that he would not."

In truth, the cold loyalty of the man towards the wife for whom he had never had any love, was indicative of his character. We all know the neglected look of apartments that are not dwelt in, and are abandoned to dead memories: how the brown holland covers seem to properly assume the complexion

of the dead; how the lamp hangs from the ceiling, in its cover, like a dirty, yellow, but most gigantic pear; how the oiled fire-irons manage to rust through their dingy papers; and the chairs, which seem to have had a ghastly game of jump a little wag-tail, huddle one on the other, and half of them upside down, crying, as plainly as such things can cry, "Don't sit here, if you please; shut the door, and leave us alone;" and how the tables set their legs—bare and strong-looking—firmly down, as if they had determined to be put upon no longer.

It was not so with Lady Chesterton's "own rooms," to which Mrs Preen had been ordered to conduct Winifred. The boudoir was a picture of religious comfort; and the bedroom, with a lively, cheerful fire, was sweetly habitable, and full of quiet ease. Lady Chesterton had never taken a foremost part in her husband's house; but had "chosen the better part," as she said—and she was not altogether wrong—"of a quiet, religious retirement," not without dignity and comfort.

The bedroom, which looked on the garden of Chesterton House, might have been a sitting-room too, it was so large and well furnished with sofas, writing-tables, and easy chairs. The chairs and sofas were covered in soft, subdued and sober, but excellent French chintz. The bed was large, and on its head cloth had a coronet worked in gold thread. There was throughout the room an air of rank and luxury, tempered by an evident connection with religion, indicative of the union between the husband and wife. Some of the religious literature, of which there was so ample a stream in the boudoir, had flowed over into the bedroom; and a little hanging-shelf of books contained the choicest works of Baptist and Calvinistic divinity, to soothe and gratify the sleepless hours of the Countess.

What a contrast the whole presented to the rooms of the Countess of Sark! My Lady Sark was indeed a Greek of the old school, to whom such books as these, and such preachments as they contained, were but "foolishness." But Winifred took up and opened the volumes with a reverent gentleness, and sighed over the fierce denunciations and the harsh sentences which sometimes seemed to shut up the Book of Mercy with an iron clasp.

There was a New Testament among these, and Winifred sweetened the bitterness of the partizan divines by reading the Sermon on the Mount ; and, after dismissing Mrs Preen, and declaring that she was always her own lady's-maid, and did not know the want of any other, she knelt down by the side of the large bed, and offered up her prayers for Philip—for her Philip, without whom her life was nothing. And if poor mortals can put up to Heaven an unselfish prayer ; if thoughts of the poor old Earl, of Mr Horton ; if peace and goodwill to all, flowing in broken sentences, without one word except to ask forgiveness for her sins, can be called unselfish, then the little earnest even-song of poor troubled Winifred will be found in the list of those most pure and infrequent petitions.

She was soon asleep—asleep with her husband's name last-syllabled by her lips, and dwelling there as if it were some charm. But night brought back the troubled visions of the day ; and Winifred, in her dreams, wandered through the old house, marked the grim black heads of the twelve Cæsars in the library, the armour and the arms in the rack, the great state staircase of the house, and the genealogical tree and portraits of the Chestertons.

Sleep came with whole and complete visions of things unseen, and gave life and reality to the half-formed pictures of the mind, conjured up by the gossip of the housekeeper.

There was the old Countess, Philip's mother, staid and pale, dressed with extreme neatness, with a book in her hand—a precious volume, for it was carefully covered in fine brown holland : it was much read, for the leaves were not unencumbered with marks of favourite passages ; and this lady, without causing any surprise to Winifred, glided softly into the room, and sat down with a sigh, turning over the leaves, referring to these passages, and glancing now and then at the occupant of the bed.

"I know I ought not to be here," murmured Winifred ; "but you will excuse me, Countess, will you not? I am so tired—so very tired !—I want to sleep."

"Sleep on, my child—sleep on," said the vision, austerely. "There will be little rest in the grave for us who wait and wait."

"It must be all rest, I should think," said Winifred; "for there is little peace here, in this naughty world."

"For some there is—a mighty satisfying rest—no trouble and no turmoil. Still they wait! But sleep, my child. I am not angry. I am glad to see you here."

"You are very kind, Countess—very kind. You speak gently, like my Philip—your son Philip."

"My son Philip?" said the lady, in a questioning manner, turning over the leaves of her book as if seeking for some reassuring passage.

"Yes, your son Philip. Wicked people say that he is not your son; but we are all right now you are come. I can go and tell him the good news. They cannot dispute your evidence, although mine is of no avail."

"Go and see him to-morrow!" The Countess seemed to repeat these words as if with emphasis, and as a warning.

"Of course I will, and tell him to be of good cheer. And his father"——

Here the figure seemed to be somewhat painfully affected. Its brows were slightly knitted, and her hand was raised for a moment, as if to smooth away trouble.

"We were not very happy," she murmured; "and now I know all, how could we have been?"

"Do ghosts," thought Winifred, "know the secrets of the earth? How must this awful blazon affect some loves and friendships there!—to think that a burial should be a revelation, and an unveiling of desperate secrets unto many! Rest!—what rest can there be to some, with all things known?"

The ghost or vision seemed at once to read her thoughts; and this, of course, did not surprise Winifred, who heard her visitant calmly say—

"You see, I told you so; there is little rest *for some*. But as for his father, I forgive him all; and now I know his heart, I love him more than I did on earth. There is trouble for him—trouble for all. You may see Philip; but he must visit Edgar's mother; he must see that woman!"

And so the vision faded, still keeping her thin fingers in an open place in the book, still looking steadfastly at Winifred. It left much that Winifred wanted it to say unsaid, as visions

mostly do; but it left upon the sleeper's ear the words, "He must visit Edgar's mother."

But who was Edgar? The very identity of the two young men was disputed. It was this vital question that the young wife wished answered. She felt no particular anguish or trouble in her dream, but a very great desire for this information; and, ere the door closed, she cried out—

"Oh, Countess, do"——

"Well, I'm sure," thought Mrs Preen, "waking with the name of my poor mistress on her lips! I have brought you some chocolate, my lady, just as the Countess used to have. And if you wish to see her, there she is."

She pointed to a picture on which the light fell, and Winifred recognised the very features of the faded vision of her sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Thus the team rattles into London town;
The coach draws up, the passengers get down."
The Adventures of S. Wideawake, p. 15.

Mr Samuel Brownjohn, sergeant P.C., and formerly Bow Street runner, was fortunately able to secure for his prisoner, his two companions, and himself, the inside of the Dover mail; which, with well-appointed and shining steeds, and two lamps glaring defiantly into the darkness, set forward to London, from the Ship Hotel, very shortly after the travellers had taken sufficient refreshment to keep body and soul together, as Mr César Negretti declared, with a knowledge of English colloquialisms upon which we have formerly remarked.

César was in buoyant spirits; and one would have imagined he was going to a wedding rather than on an unpleasant business connected with a London police court. Patsy Quelch looked at him with a kind of admiring hatred; but having, at Brownjohn's instance, laid in a very good stock of provender, and being very tired, he soon fell into a comfortable doze in the corner of the coach, opposite his Italian foe.

Brownjohn, a man of resource, had purchased a square glass

lantern; and lighting a wax candle, had hung this illuminator from the roof, so that he had a capital view of the principal parties he was conducting to London; and he actually kept his face to his foe all the way, by sitting opposite to him.

Mr Martin ate like an innocent man fresh from the sea, and punished the excellent cold beef as if he were feeding on the fare of the enemy; then he subsided into his marine and French melancholy, and did little but sigh. He had timidly asked one or two questions about his darling Estelle; but Brownjohn was not to be taken in, and declared that he had best keep "his tongue between his teeth."

"Look here, Mr Mar*ton*," said the police-officer. "I'm a sergeant of the police, formerly a runner. What is my business? Well, my business was to run after you, and to catch you. I am upon that lay. I sees my duty, and I does it; and I shall deliver you up to the proper authorities."

"*Si, si*," said Negretti; "that's all well and good. Mr Brownjohn will play his part—has, indeed. Thunder of heaven!—played his part pretty well."

The sparkling eyes of the Maltese glittered in the lamplight; and seemed to say that, if he could play *his* part with Brownjohn, he would willingly do so.

"Slack your jaw, Negretti? I was about to tell this honest old gentleman—who isn't accused of any dirty pilfering, but of a job that requires some kind of courage—what I was going to say is this: I ain't an inquisitor, and I ain't no spy. I scorns the action as much as any man. My business is straightforward, and I've done it, and there's an end. And now I'm going to light a cheroot and be comfortable."

Hereon, the Sergeant lapsed for a few moments into silence. Then, after a puff or so—when the huge, rough British cheroot had a blazing end, glowing like a red-hot coal—he continued:

"I must tell my old friend here—who is a foreigner, and belike does not understand our customs—that he will have lots of opportunity of knowing all about it; and that he will find some gentlemen in London who will tell him all he wants, and ask him plenty of questions into the bargain."

"*Mais oui*, my good friend," said the Père Martin; "I will answer them, and tell them my story."

"Spoken like a man—and don't tell me none. Let's have a comfortable journey, for what you says to me I shall say to them. Therefore, look you, mum's the word, my French friend—mum *is* the word."

Hereon he took his cheroot from his lips, and laid thereon a strong brown finger, thus indicating silence.

The outside passengers—of whom there were not many, and one of whom had given up his inside place to the officer, so that he should hold his little flock together, and keep them under his eye—had now crawled up to the top of the coach, tucked themselves up in their Benjamins, put wrappers round their knees, and more than one heavy coat on their shoulders, and had settled down in their places. The coachman—in a broad-rimmed hat, and a Welsh flannel night-cap, made like a barrister's wig, under it, which kept his ears warm—leant down from his box seat, and cleverly caught the reins on his whip; and then, in a hoarse voice, mellowed by rum and shrub, told the ostlers to "take off their cloths," cast a careful eye to the off-leader, and "then let 'em have their heads;" and away, with a creak and a groan, with rattling of harness and jingling of chains, flew the night coach; the horses, no less than their driver, making a point of going out of the town whence they started, and into that where they arrived, with a "spurt."

Patsy Quelch woke up not less with the starting of the coach than a violent kick on the shins which César took occasion to give him, pretending that the starting of the horses made him slip forward.

"You leave me alone, will you!" said Patsy, bearing the pain heroically, and turning very red. "I did not do nothing to you."

The boy rubbed his shin with a rueful countenance.

"What's he been a-doing, Patsy?" asked the police-officer. "I shall have to pinch him yet, I know."

César, on his side, was profuse in his apologies. He had never intended to hurt the boy; in fact, he had hurt his own toe against the hard leg of the young Irish gentleman.

The while he said this, his dark eyes beamed with the richest good-humour, and even with a charitable and universal spirit; his cheeks glowing a rosy red with a rich and generous laugh,

of course at his own expense, but suppressed for excellent reasons —such as the Christian one of not hurting the feelings of Patsy.

Patsy quite understood all this, and writhed under it, without being able to return it. If there was any one whom Mr Quelch hated with an hereditary hatred more than the cold and successful Englishman, who would persist in being well clothed and well housed, it was the foreigner, who rivalled Patsy's countrymen in doing John Bull's work. And of all foreigners, César was *the* one—in fact, the quintessence and embodiment of all the hated foreigners in one.

Brownjohn, being certain that Patsy had received a very hard kick, made César exchange places with Mr Martin, having, by a study of some ten minutes in silence, found much to be trusted in the honest countenance of the French sailor.

"Now, Negretti," said Sam Brownjohn, "you have got a good opportunity to kick my shins—and you won't hurt your toes, d'ye see, against my Hessian boots. So kick away!"

To this severe sarcasm the Maltese had nothing to reply, and the whole party lapsed into silence.

The spanking team of four chestnuts—which were excellent horses, being those which rested at the last stage *from* London, and the horses destined to bring the coach *into* Dover—had now settled down into regular and hard work; and the coach dashed onward through shadow and shade, now lighted by the evening moon upon an open heath, now hidden by the deep shadows of some woods, now for a few moments shone upon by the lights from some village lattice.

Still the chestnuts kept their onward pace, scarcely slackening at the little risings in the road, but very cautiously going down hill, and gathering strength for a good rush on the level.

"Take a cigar," said the box-seat to the coachman.

Jehu was nothing loath, and delivered the reins, as tenderly as one would have lifted an infant's cradle, into the traveller's hands. The ribbons were heavy, and the box-seat said so.

"Umph!" said the driver, who soon had his cigar of a-glow. "I thought you would say so. The outer world don't know the trials and troubles of a driver of one of his Majesty's mails. One might as well be Prime Minister. You don't know what I've got in this boot now?"

"Letters, of course—some valuable."

"Vallible, you say! Vallible! Untold! Why, I got the halves of forty thousand in bank notes. T'other halves went up a day ago. Clerk's behind with a lot o' pistols. Not that half-notes would be o' any use; but it would be ork'ard, special ork'ard, if some o' them marauderers carried off 'aff o' them. Oh, my hi!" Here Jehu laughed. "But we are safe to-night," he continued—"quite safe."

"How so to-night, more than at other times?"

"'Cos guard's behind with a blunderbuster—particular wide in the mouth, and loaded up to the muzzle with duck shot; and 'cos we've got some one mysterus inside."

"And who might he be?"

"Well, he was a King's officer—not a soldier officer, but an officer who serves his Majesty and the public as well."

"So do soldiers."

"They pretend to; but all they thinks of is themselves and the King, and their gold lace and scarlet fal-lals. They were agin the public mostly, and would shoot down the public as they did at Peterloo massacre."

Here both the coachman and the box-seat shook their heads. The memory of that dreadful event was still fresh in their minds, although it was ten years ago; and, indeed, the public love for soldiers, so strong after Waterloo, had fallen to zero after its miserable antithesis.

"As for the Yeomanry," ejaculated Jehu, "are they friendly to us?"

"I think not," said the box-seat.

A prolonged silence ensued. The coach struggled through low-lying lands, through the white fog which was pouring down the lanes, and entering the fields through the gaps in the hedges. The travellers' eyes had got accustomed to the light, and were able to see this—which non-observant people overlook—that fog is a liquid which can be poured from one space into another.

"Give 'em some music, Bill," cried Jehu to the guard. "It will wake up the 'osses, and clear away the fog."

So the guard, standing up in the hind seat, and blowing at the fog lustily, woke up the echoes from the distant woods

with the "Merry Swiss Boy;" and the coach having, by the time the "Swiss Boy" had "taken his pail and to labour away'd" three or four times, got upon a breezy heath, coachee declared that it was all right, for nothing cleared away a fog so well as a bugle.

"Well, you ought to know," said the traveller.

"Yes, I oughter. I've had enough 'sperience, travelling up o' nights for 'arf the nights o' the year. My old partner, he takes 'arf of 'em off me."

"And what is the officer you have got inside?"

"Why, a King's officer from Bow Street, man"—this was said with as much pride as if the coach carried the king himself—"and he's got a fellow disguised as a seafarin' man—a desp'rit character—one as robs and slaughters all he can. He was a burglar!" Here was a pause for effect—if, as Jehu suspected, he was "a parishcide, or some kind of desp'rit murderer."

The box-seat agreeing with Jehu that no foot-pad would be bold enough to rob the coach under these circumstances, the two subsided, and were silent during three or four stages.

During part of the way, the box-seat fell asleep, the air becoming keener as the morning drew near; and the four insides, warmed by mutual aid, yielded—or rather, three-parts of them did—to the drowsy god of slumber. But Samuel Brownjohn—smoking slowly and with careful parsimony, as if he had a long time to play with, and refreshing himself with a pull at his rum and water—slept no more than the coachman; and he was wide-awake enough when the latter, cold and stiff, got down at the Bull in Holborn, and stamped his stiffened feet upon the stones of London.

"Come, wake up, Mr Mar*ton*," said Brownjohn, kindly. "We'll have a little breakfast while they airs an 'ackney coach with a warmin' pan."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Look you, good master Shirke, a man's heart is not always his own property; and if marriages be made in Heaven, there are other matches made in"—— *The Adventurer*, act i. sc. 3.

Poor human nature has, as Old Daylight more than once found, a very great deal to put up with. While he was doing his best to serve his Majesty in finding out the perpetrator of this crime, the public was getting impatient, and finding fault with him.

For the *Luminary*, in reference to the *Argus*, confessed that our "contemporary, which claims to be the organ of the upper classes, was in some measure right in calling attention to any laxity which might have existed on the part of the police—at present a new force, but which would be equal to any emergency."

Since that time, a great portion of the press has found itself able to speak with laudatory terms of active and intelligent police; and great geniuses have written up the blundering efforts and chance "finds" of the detective officer, so that he has become a hero of romance and play; but at that time it was not so.

Mr Tom Forster—being an inductive philosopher, and making pretty sure of the threads which he gathered up, and very seldom mistaken in the clue he was to follow—did not like to be hurried.

He knew as well as most people how far that bugbear, the public, took heed of these remarkably able leaders—or, as our American cousins call them, editorials; as he knew the weakness as well as the power of the press—"which is," he said once, "like a slow match, or, if you like, a torch. It always burns, and, if you heed it, will light you; but sometimes it emits a spark which falls upon a train of gunpowder, and will blow you to shivers. The case is," continued the philosopher, "that one of these neat articles is brought before a great man. He reads it, becomes indignant at a fancied wrong, and hurries away and punishes the offender. You have no notion what good—and what evil—you gentlemen of the press do."

But, besides this trouble, Mr Forster had another.

After he had reached home on the night of Natalie's benefit —which took place the night succeeding that on which Edgar Wade had so long an interview with Lord Chesterton—the faith of Old Daylight was somewhat shaken in his beloved *protégé*, the barrister.

He knew that barristers were sometimes wild young fellows ; and, to be sure, in those dark days, the Temple was not the studious and cloistered home of learning and virtue which it now is—when, of course, none but the steps of young men anxious to redress the wrongs of mankind, and to disentangle victims from the meshes of the law, walk its courts. But he was somewhat hurt at the concealment Edgar had practised towards him.

"Tut!" he said, when comforting himself with some real cognac, hot water, and sugar—and of the best sort—and with red bandana spread on his knees, smoking a pipe of consolation —"Tut! What should a young fellow like that—heir to an earldom—do with an old fellow like me?"

It would have seemed, indeed, very little, for Old Daylight believed a great deal more of his ideal than he knew of the real Edgar.

"I wonder whether he has known this Natalie long! That was the little woman that he intended his bouquet for. Well, I don't think much of her; but old eyes and young eyes are not alike. I have seen dancers! Dancers," continued Old Forster to himself, blowing a strong cloud upwards to his ceiling, "are like everything else. You may see a heap of 'em not worth a rap; then comes a genius of what they call the Terpsichorean art, and you are repaid—you 've seen a dancer!" Then followed a long puff of smoke, and this reflection—"I wonder why young men fall in love with dancers. I never should have done so. I *loved* a gentle, low-voiced, fresh-faced, innocent little thing—and what women go through before they get to perfection on the boards is not to be thought of, poor things!—and it would have broken my heart to have seen *her* capering in short petti*cuts* above the heads of those grinning idiots in the omnibus box. But, law bless you! there is always another way of looking at things. I suppose some men like

them because they are active and muscular. All muscle, I should think, like a thin shoulder of Dartmoor mutton. But that 's neither here nor there. I must find out more about it, just for Edgar's interest. He 's not going to throw away the coronet of Chesterton on her, I hope."

And so the philosopher sat smoking, following out his inductive processes—determined to find out who and what Natalie was, and to pump the good manager, Dunn.

"That fellow Rolt took him behind the scenes—bless him! I wonder what poor Mrs Rolt thought of that. But they are queer fellows, lit'ry men. They go everywhere, like police officers."

Torn with jealousy, with rage, and disappointment, Edgar did not come home very early that night. He was haunted by visions of Natalie's smile when she had thrown him over, to be driven home in my lord's chariot. Lord Duberly's chariot and Dr Pangloss's quotation, "*Curru portatur eodem*," came quaintly into his head, and stung him into a jealous rage.

And so vexed by unrequited love, with despair, and with rage was he, that, when he came home very late, he was not surprised to find Mr Forster sitting up for him, and even returned the unexpected greeting of that good friend with some graciousness.

"You 're late after the opera, Mr Wade," said the old man holding the light above his head, and marking the somewhat disordered dress and faltering gait of Edgar.

"Yes," said the barrister, somewhat surprised. "How did you know I was there?"

"I was there myself. I am fond of good music—good music and Shakespeare's plays."

"Your taste is perfection," answered Edgar, with a slight sneer. "But it 's very good of you to wait up for me."

"My taste is good enough for a plain old man. I shall not change it at my age. I find the young are passing me, and love other pursuits."

"Yes, they do say the drama is declining, and they are going in for spectacle and the ballet."

"They want something to amuse them in this frivolous age."

"Frivolous age! Good God!" said the barrister, "was there anything ever known so deadly, sombre, and melancholy? You are smoking, I perceive. I will join you. I do not feel inclined to go to bed, nor to go up-stairs."

"All is well there—very much the same. Dr Richards wonders at the vitality of his patient. Poor woman!—poor woman!"

"Did he say there were any hopes," asked Edgar—but he used the last word as if it meant rather "fears"—"any hopes of her recovery?"

"She may recover at any moment. It is not a state of coma, although she shows no recognition of anything that is passing. But this cannot continue long. Any quickening of her faculties will come through the nerves. She sees not any one who comes in the room; but it is doubtful if she may not perceive one whom she loves or hates!"

"Humanity is curious, is it not?" asked Edgar. "So is fate—so is circumstance: and man is its creature."

"And its creator," solemnly returned Old Daylight, handing his friend an excellent cigar, and filling his own pipe.

"We will not argue upon that point," returned the barrister, loftily—as if the elder man had an intellect so much beneath his own, that words were thrown away upon it. "A man cannot exactly dictate how he shall be born—say black or white."

He threw out this with an indignant toss of the chin, as if it was a crushing reply to Tom Forster; and—like many other persons in this world—was perfectly ready to argue, although he had himself declined the combat.

Mr Forster looked at him, and said nothing; but he pushed a stiff glass of brandy and water to him.

"You will find that refresh you. You are tired, and annoyed with something."

"A man, I presume," continued Edgar, testily, "could not help being put in the situation I am placed in by his father—heir to God knows what trouble, trial, and affliction?"

"I never said that he could help that," said Tom; "but, being in for it, he can behave himself well. As for the old trumpery nonsense about the circumstance of birth, nobody but a fool supposed that a man could or should regulate that.

But he can regulate what he does after he comes to man's estate. God bless me!" said Tom Forster, looking round the room, "it cannot matter much whether a man be born a nigger or a British admiral; but it does matter whether he be a good nigger and a good admiral."

Mr Edgar Wade said nothing, but puffed his cigar gloomily.

"I have read in some old divine," continued the detective, "that if an angel from Heaven"—Tom bowed his head here, speaking as if it were customary to one of his reverential nature to show respect to principalities and powers—"were to be offered on earth the choice of being an emperor or a servant, he would choose the latter office, and perform his work without repining."

"That may be. It does not concern me. I hate these speculations; they prove nothing. I can only feel that I am here, kept out of my just rights, hampered with people about whom I care nothing, and disappointed in my love."

"I did not know you were in love," answered the old man. "I am perhaps foolish; but I thought the study of the law, with, above all, the great trial you are engaged in, was enough to absorb all your energy and attention."

"As if a man could be nourished on such stuff," returned Edgar, bitterly. And then, since trouble and disappointment go far to make a man indulge in strange confidants, Edgar told his old friend of his passion for Natalie Fifine.

"You love her," said Tom Forster, in a kindly way; for the story explained many of the suspicions which had grown up in the philosopher's mind during the time that he was watching his *protégé*. "But, surely, under the altered circumstances of your fortune, you would not marry her?"

"I have chosen my part," said Edgar, bitterly. "This love is one of the circumstances that I cannot control. It masters me. Why not marry her? Did not Lord Ffarrinton—an old name, spelt like the Ffrenchs' name with two F's—did not he marry an actress?"

"Yes," returned Tom; "but I have my prejudices. Lady Ffarrinton was an actress of great merit, a lady of education, and much personal beauty; but, excuse me, she was not a French dancer."

"Nor was she Natalie Fifine."

Mr Tom Forster said nothing; but with a sigh, recalled the adage—

"Where love's in the case,
The doctor's an ass."

His ideal was slowly melting away before him.

"Could there be," thought the romantic old dreamer, "a more enviable position, for a young man of talent and ambition, than that of filling the place of an English nobleman, full of opportunities of resuscitating the ancient glory of his race; of leading, nay, of wielding the proud democracy which of late had shown so great an ambition and so marvellous a power? And yet, here was this young fellow, brought up in a lower sphere, and educated so that he could fully appreciate his advantages, about to throw all away on a dancer!"

"And she," continued the old man, "I think you said, seemed to show a preference for Lord—Lord"——

"Lord Montcastel," said Edgar, with something like an oath which would carry anything but good fortune to that amiable and eccentric Irish peer.

"A man old enough to be her father," said Tom Forster. "I have seen his lordship before to-night. But, then, he has a title, which at present you have not. And the young lady is ambitious."

"Poor Natalie! She works, she tells me, for the sake of an old father and mother, and is full of devotion to them. How beautiful such a devotion; how different from the sordid selfishness of the world!"

"It is a beautiful thing to witness," returned Mr Forster, drily; "and is, perhaps, more frequently heard of than seen. But I hope you are not deceived."

"Few people can deceive me," said Edgar Wade. "I have been brought up in a hard school, and that has sharpened my wits. I have cast in my lot. I will do anything to obtain Natalie. She must only be cajoling that villainously ugly old reprobate, with his high cheek bones and his ginger whiskers."

The conference was at an end; and Mr Edgar Wade, still

gloomy, and full of disgust, threw the end of his cigar into the fire, and stalked off to bed like an ill-used man.

As Tom Forster divested himself of his clothing, and put himself to bed, he kept revolving on the new complexion which the episode of the night had given to matters. Edgar had a plain right to fall in love with anybody; but Mr Forster had so identified him with a noble career, which he hoped he would have run, that he felt the step Edgar had taken to be something like a blow and a disappointment.

"'Man is born to trouble,'" said the philosopher to himself, in a desponding voice, "'as the sparks fly upwards.' He was a wise man who made that queer simile. Here am I, an old fellow who had performed that difficult task of living for another, and of absolutely forgetting myself, and a pretty mess I have made of it. Cast in his lot, indeed! There are two things *I* don't like about her—she is a foreigner and a dancer; and though she may leave off her trade, she can't get over her breed."

And the prejudiced old party, placing his head and his bandana on the pillow, soon forgot himself otherwise than unselfishly and in sleep.

"O Natalie! Natalie! can it be possible that you don't love me?" murmured the barrister; "and after all that I have done for you—and when fate was about to turn the golden side of Fortune's shield towards me!"

And then he thought of the complication that he was in; of the desire that Lord Chesterton had exhibited of seeing the unhappy woman who lay so ill not far from him; of Lord Wimpole, whom he had promised to defend; of the pressure of that business, and yet of his overwhelming desire to forestall Lord Montcastel; and of his growing suspicion, which he could not master nor cast out, of Natalie's falseness.

"It is enough to make a man mad," he said. "One might also believe there was a devil, and that he mixed in human affairs. What a terrible position is mine." (It is plain that Edgar Wade, clever and generous as he was, could feel for himself as well as for others.) "These matters come upon us when we are so tied and hampered. But it is late, and I must sleep."

And to sleep he endeavoured to compose himself; saying, as he slept—

"It will but make matters worse. The old nobleman is already half demented: he must not see Mrs Wade."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR SCOREM MAKES HIS DEBUT, AND IS HIMSELF TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

Poor Mr Checketts was disconsolate. A whole day was passed, and the greater part of another, and yet his master did not return. There was something so peculiarly depressing and mysterious in this, that Checketts consulted Mr Gurgles; but received from him nothing but of a proverbial and prophetic character, which, truly, did not comfort Checketts, being of a shadowy nature, while the food demanded by the truly British mind of Checketts must necessarily be solid.

"Mr Gurgles," said Checketts, with a sigh.

"Sir," said Gurgles, "you were about to consult me. 'Truly,' as the editor remarks, 'there is a price in the hand of a fool for wisdom, and the way of transgressors is hard.'"

Checketts could not for the life of him see what those mystic sentences, of which he by no means disputed the truth, had to do with the matter; so he was silent and meditative.

"It 's all very true," said Gurgles, thinking he had shut up his companion; "yes, very true; 'the beginning of strife,' he said in another article, 'is like the letting out of waters.'"

"I wish I could let out at somebody," muttered Checketts, viciously. "What I want you to tell me, Mr Gurgles, is this—what have they done with my lord?"

"Truly," returned Mr Gurgles, in the same misty way, "'the crown of a wise man is his riches;' and again he tells us, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' We are born to disappointment, my young friend."

Hope deferred! The homely truth fell upon the ear of poor Checketts with a mournful sound. The great deep was broken up; the house of Chesterton had been entered by the

police; the aristocracy had been defied; and the grand old Earl—who, as Checketts thought, could do anything—was, as Gurgles said, nothing better than "a broken reed, or a lodge in a garden of cucumbers."

"He is an original man, that Mr Gurgles," said Checketts. "He is deep—so deep!—but he confuses me. He has a gigantic mind, no doubt; but he is beyond me." Here the faithful servant fell again to meditating on his master's fate; and at last got so nervous that he could not stay indoors, but preferred a request to Mr Roskell for leave of absence.

That being granted, although it was late in the afternoon, Checketts went down to the Temple, with a vague idea of calling upon Mr Edgar Wade; but not having the courage to do so—for the barrister had impressed him with a sense of fear and of power—he wandered round and round the plashing little fountain, and looked over the garden to the placid river, glittering and shining in a mild October evening.

While he was thus engaged, looking dreamily askance rather than before him, he was nearly knocked down by a person hurrying out of the very door he lingered about; and, even with the blow, he was conscious of a faint smell of apples.

"Beg pardon, sir, I 'm sure," cried Scorem, for it was he! "beg pardon." The clerk, studying his speech with the absorption of a born orator, had hardly noticed where he was running.

"Don't mention it," returned Checketts, rubbing his shoulder.

"Hallo!" cried Scorem; "the gentleman from Chesterton House, I see. Do you want Mr Edgar Wade?"

"Not particularly," returned Checketts, confusedly. "I wanted to know if he 's heard anything of Lord Wimpole, d 'ye see?"

"He will communicate, sir," said Scorem, officially. "He is sure to do so; he is a gentleman of eminent business capacity. A wonderful man, sir. He was in the Robing Room."

"What 's that?" asked Checketts.

"Why, where barristers put on their war paint—the gowns, bands, and those wonderful wigs! Ah, sir, you should see my governor in 'em; he looks beautiful. A fine forehead, has he not?"

"I did not see it as I knows of."

"You are not a physiognomist, sir, I am afraid," said Scorem.

"Well, I have never even been that way," returned Checketts, thinking that Scorem alluded to some strange country.

"Nor a politician, perhaps."

"No; I leave politics to great people, sir," returned Checketts, mildly. "Whatever my master thinks, I know is about right, for he 's one of the best of men."

"Noble fellow!" cried Scorem, grasping his hand; "you are a Tory of the old school. You detest Whiggery and jiggery, snobbery, jobbery, and robbery."

Checketts smiled, and said, faintly, that of the two he was a purple rather than a blue and buff—such being the colours of the respective parties in his time; and upon this, Mr Scorem embraced him. Then said that patriot—

"What will you take to drink? Let us cement our friendship."

With that marvellous freemasonry of honest souls by which they recognise each other, Mr Checketts had at once admired and liked the barrister's clerk; and, feeling that he wanted a less prophetic and obscure friend and companion than Gurgles, he said immediately—

"Well, sir, I 'll take anything you are so good as to offer me."

"Spoken like an officer and a gentleman—like a patriot and a Conservative. Come along, sir!"

In this manner the melancholy Checketts was beguiled into drinking a glass of excellent ale—for Mr Scorem knew his houses, and was on excellent terms with the young ladies, in huge bows and gauze turbans, who poured out the nightly ale for his delectation. These damsels Scorem addressed in a fatherly way, as if much learning had added a weight of years to his noble forehead. The effect of this was that the girls laughed with much gusto; for, with all his wisdom, Mr Scorem looked but young.

"Well, my darling," he would say, "you are glad to see the old man again. You are looking blooming, my daughter; but your father—that is, myself—wishes that you were married and settled."

"You are *such* a one, Mr Scorem—always poking your fun."

"No such thing, my juvenile flower," the clerk would answer, with a solemn face. "Age has its privileges. Might I ask whether you have made it up with the stage-coachman?"

Wherever he went he was a favourite; and at the tavern he called at with Checketts, his first action was to pull out a fine apple, and present it to the young lady.

"My aunt," he said, "miss—who shall be nameless; but who, I need not say, looking at her nephew, is well advanced in years—sent me, from her villa at Kingston-on-Thames, this charming Blenheim orange."

"Horange, Mr Scorem! why, it is a happle," said the young lady, shaking her turban at him. "You are so funny!"

"That 's what it is called," returned the clerk, politely lifting his hat. "Bless you, this aged individual knows every apple, from a British cat's-head to a Siberian crab; from a Kerry pippin to a Quarrendon; and from the Summer sweet, which is the first to ripen, to the Russeting, which is not ripe till mid-winter. Apples, miss, are my study—apples and the ladies."

Here, lifting his glass, he drank to his new friend; and then added, with a weary sigh, as if bitter experience had oppressed him—

"And, I'm bound to say, I get much more satisfaction from the fruit than"—here he winked at the barmaid—"the flower."

"Oh, go along with you, do!" giggled the pretty girl, catching at the compliment—as what woman will not?

"That was rather neat," continued Scorem, without a smile on his countenance. "I may say, very neat—for an old one. Ah! Mr—I did not catch your name—Checketts—oh! I remember—ah! Mr Checketts, hard work, late hours, the study of the law and politics, soon turn a young man into an old un. Will you take another glass?"

"With pleasure, sir," returned Checketts. "On'y you see that *I* am to have the honour of paying for it *this* time."

"Pardon me, sir," said Scorem, raising his hat, "you are *my* guest!"

Checketts, not to be behind the polite clerk, raised his beaver as well, and said—

"I have been, sir, and now I hope you will not object to be mine."

The ale had warmed him and raised his spirits.

"Neat—very neat," murmured the clerk, who, to say the truth, expected nothing less. "After this, sir, I lie at your mercy." Here Mr Scorem struck an attitude, like Mr Kean in "Richard the Third," and said, in a tragic voice, "Do your work," so comically, that Checketts and the barmaid burst out laughing.

"Renew the potation, sweet damozell!" said Scorem, solemnly. "Your father feels his inner man renewed. I can meet my opponent on the hustings. I can lay him flat on the floor of the House."

"Are you in the House?" asked Checketts, simply.

"Sir, I have not arrived yet to that honour, but I am certain that my place lies *there*"—he pointed in the direction of the Houses of Parliament; "but cruel fortune forbids me. But, sir, if a common blacking manufacturer may represent Preston, as does Mr Hunt, why, sir, should not I, in after-years—if the old man survives so long—defend my country in that hall of eloquence, freedom, liberty, and the British Constitution?"

After this peroration, Scorem grew communicative; and owned that, if not a member of St Stephen's, he was looked for with anxiety at "another place." By this parliamentary expression Scorem indicated the Lumber Troopers' Hall; and, in a very few words, as they finished the second glass of good old ale, invited Checketts to hear him speak.

The ale, the good-fellowship, and a certain admiration which he had for his new companion, made Checketts accept the invitation frankly; and in due time the two new friends wended their way down Fleet Street, turned round the corner of St Dunstan's Passage, and, diving down what seemed to him a curious network of courts, entered a smoky old tavern where "another place" was held.

The origin of the ancient guild of the Cogers, and the fraternity of the Lumber Troop, is, like that of the Freemasons,

lost in antiquity. As Scorem said, with regard to the origin of old families, "whenever you can't find it out, it is *mist;*" but the pun was not appreciated by his companion.

Some antiquarians held that Cogers' Hall was so called because the Cogers were a kind of Alsatian freebooters, and that they derived their name from *cogere*, to compel; since they compelled their friends and enemies equally to deliver up their purses. Others said Coger came from *cog*, to cheat—as to cog a die; and others went to the slang "codger," and said that the club was originally that of the Queer Codgers, from Spanish *coger*, a catcher—a fancy slang for a set of rustic boon companions. Similarly, the Lumberers, or Lumber Troopers, were variously defined; some saying that they were a kind of mercenary transport corps to the City Train Bands; and others, that they were an ancient, honourable, and valorous fraternity.

However, great or little, the Cogers had fallen—like the Knights of St John, who held their revels in tin helmets, with wooden battle-axes covered with lead foil, at St John's Gate—to a merely drinking and smoking club, for which a show of an intellectual character was put forward as an excuse of meeting. But the innocent Checketts, acting upon the *omne ignotum* principle, felt as much gratified when he entered the mystic gate of the hall as a gentleman does when he is first introduced to the House of Commons.

A cloud of smoke, a pleasant smell as of rum, brandy, and lemons, a sort of appetising and punchy flavour, a chink of glasses, and the sound of cheery voices, broke upon Checketts' ear as he entered.

Mr Scorem was received with applause—and many had come to hear him; and these were the better sort of members, for the clerk was upholding the losing side. Manchester massacres, Birmingham and Spa Field riots, and many a sign might at that time have been read to prove that the British public was getting the bit into its mouth, and would have its way. But this has little to do with our story.

The President—a heavy man with a negro face and thick pair of lips, a chin closely shaven, wearing spectacles, and with his eyes half buried in the fat of supra-orbital space—cried, "Hear, hear! the leader of the opposition, gen'l'men," when

Scorem entered; and the clerk, proud of the recognition, grasped the Chairman's hand, and introduced his friend.

"Proud, I 'm sure," said the Chair, "to make acquaintance of the friend of a gentleman so eloquent."

"You do me proud, sir," returned Scorem. Catching sight of another friend who recognised him—"Ah! Mr Slipper, how are you, sir? Really, we shall have a night to-night, sir: there 's Barnett Slammers, of the *Luminary*. Shall we have a report, sir?"

Mr Pumps, the Chairman, believed that we should—the eye of the press, he said, was on us! He had heard it whispered—but he was afraid that it was not at that moment probable—that Mr Rumford Coaster and Mr Rolt would come down and listen.

Scorem rubbed his hands with delight; ordered hot rum and water for himself, and cold brandy for his friend, and then sat down; while Mr Pumps, in a steady flow of eloquence—which said nothing, in a pompous way—opened the debate by telling the club what it very well knew.

Mr Checketts was delighted with the club. All the members looked as wise as the seven wise men of Greece, and as solemn as owls. Their minds evidently were digesting great questions. They were all for freedom, reform, liberty, and brotherhood; but it was astonishing how these brothers bullied the waiters—how one scolded the poor wretch because the water was too hot; and another, because the gin was too weak.

"Tell the landlord I 'll take my custom away, sir! By George, sir! look at the attraction the Cogers are to his 'ouse—he ort to serve us for nothin'."

"Bedad!" retorted the waiter—carefully, however, to himself—"how glad the maist'r 'ud bay if he did; shure, all that he does is to run into debt wid him."

So, also, when the Ministry was accused of peculation, and public faith was pronounced the basis of civilisation, Mr Pumps had forgotten the numberless little bills he had neglected to pay.

But this is neither here nor there. The debate proceeded. Mr Flux—Mr Chatham Flux, we beg pardon—eloquently

opened his case; showed that the Whigs, or, indeed, Radicals, were the good angels, and the Conservatives the bad demons of the country; and then, directing his looks towards Scorem, proceeded to demolish him with withering sarcasm. All was most properly done. "Sir, I have yet to learn," "My honourable friend," and other House of Commons phrases, abounded; and at the end of the speech, when Mr Flux sat down, Scorem looked so despicably small that Checketts felt for him.

But not for long. Scorem got up, pulled at his coat collar like a barrister does at his gown, and fixing his eye on Mr Pumps, who was smoking a dry pipe to look like the other sacred fathers, proceeded in his answer. He warmed with his subject; and when he had finished, Checketts felt that there never was such a clever fellow in the world, and that Flux was demolished for ever. The house rang with applause. Mr Slipper said it was a great night. Pumps proposed Scorem's health, and compared him to Demosthenes; and Barnett Slammers slapped him on the back.

"Look you here, old fellow; if you were a barrister, by jingo, I'd give you a brief to drag to justice the murderer of that poor woman whose case I've got in hand."

"Oh, thank you, Mr Slammers; praise from you, sir, is praise indeed. That woman, you mean, of Kensal-Green?"

"Yes; the very same."

"Now, who did it, I wonder?"

"I can tell you more than any one about it," said Slammers, "because I've been just engaged in pumping the Inspector."

Here the good-natured Slammers, glad to find a listener, drew his chair between the friends, and told them, who were not unwilling to listen to so great a man, the whole history of the case.

"Then it was done by a young swell who smoked good cigars?" asked Scorem, refreshing his parched throat with one of his favourite Blenheim oranges.

"So it seems, from what I can learn."

Poor Checketts felt sick and dizzy, and complained that the smoke and excitement disagreed with him.

"Have another glass," said Scorem. "If you wait awhile, we shall have a little harmony."

"No, thank you, I couldn't, sir; I must go home. On what day did you say it occurred, sir?"

"The twenty-ninth — Michaelmas Day last — about nine o'clock, perhaps," said the reporter, proud of being the depository of that which no one else knew.

"My!"—then he paused—"my eye!" cried Scorem, staring as if he saw a ghost. "No, it can't be; it's too absurd."

It was his turn to be surprised now, and to find that rum and water, old age, and excitement can have the most mysterious effects, even upon the strongest constitution.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"THIS IS MY STORY. LET ME PLAINLY SPEAK."

Mr Brownjohn had travelled so fast, that he had overrun his own letter; and therefore, after quietly lodging his little company in warmth and safety, contented himself by sending another missive by the twopenny post—a great boon to Londoners—by which he informed George Horton, Esq., that he had got his bird, and that he believed it would all turn up in the right way.

He saw his friend, Mr Stevenson; and that officer, who had already taken his side—as we all do, whether the question be one of love or war—looked very glum as Brownjohn sketched the cunning quiet of the old man, the near "toucher" he had had in capturing him, and the readiness in which the supposed culprit was found to get to sea.

"You found nothing on him?" asked Stevenson. "No corroborative evidence—eh?"

"Not likely—that's another business. You see, he was away from us four days, and had plenty of time to get rid of anything. That will turn up in due time."

"I hope it will. It somehow always does. See how that man Edwards managed to fix Mr Arthur Thistlewood and company," added the Inspector.

"Mr Edwards was a spy," returned the Bow Street runner, with an adjective applied to the last noun which we will not

repeat. "I scorn such business. Give 'em all fair play, say I, however bad they may be."

"Well, we have got a riddle somehow, and I hope one of you will get well out of it, that 's all."

"Never fear, my son," replied Brownjohn, confident of having held his clue pretty tightly, and having done all, according to the rule of thumb, that an honest and not very scientific police officer could be expected to do.

As these two were talking thus quietly, who should come in, from his office in Homer Street—where he had been for letters—but Mr Tom Forster.

"Mornin', sir," said Brownjohn.

"Good morning, my friend."

This was said with a polite and distant bow.

"You 've got your man, I hear, Mr Forster."

"We have a person on suspicion; but time only can tell us if it be *the* man."

"And I 've got mine—that sailor fellow; and the tall boy will be here in a moment to recognise him."

"How do you know it is the same, if you picked him up at a distance?"

"Bless you, he does not deny it, sir. I 'm not likely to catch hold of the wrong bird. I ain't no speculative amatoor," answered Brownjohn, with a laugh.

"Let those laugh who win," interposed Mr Inspector, severely. "However, it is a fair race, gentlemen. One of them will swing some of these fine mornings."

The police officer spoke thus lightly, for in those days hardly a Monday morning passed by without some one swinging for sheep stealing, burglary, forgery, or other crimes against property; and to hang a man for murder was but a light thing. Professionally, too, these gentlemen looked at a race which must end in taking the life of some fellow-man in an artistic and interested way, just as sporting men look at the race between two noble horses, uncertain which will win.

"Hallo, here 's the beak," said Brownjohn, and Mr Horton entered.

"You have got your man, then, Brownjohn?" asked that functionary, hopefully.

He had begun to believe, against his own conviction, that Philip Stanfield might prove to be innocent.

"Yes, sir, after a long chase. We were on his track the whole time, but somehow he managed to give us the slip."

"All 's well that ends well," said the magistrate, cheerily.

But although he spoke cheerily, he looked very ill and fagged. He had conquered his love—but by an effort; and he felt for Winifred as much compassion as the most tender father could have done. So, quietly he entered his office and sat down, exchanging a few words with Mr Forster; and those few words did not seem to exhilarate him.

"Bring forward your man, then," he said.

Oh! how weary he was of his profession—always meeting with guilt, finding that goodness and virtue were so rare, and that weakness and wickedness were so common.

The Père Martin was a fine specimen of one of those hardy sailors born on the northern coasts of France, who are as simple and kindly as they are brave. They lead a life of danger and hardship without repining; they live without luxury, rear their children on the gains of a scantily paid industry; attend to their priests, and pray to the Virgin regularly; enjoy their short holidays with their wine and their omelettes, and perhaps a fat hen added to their soup; grow gradually into old age, and seem to perish without regret, if they are lucky enough to escape the storms which vex their iron-bound coast.

When the old seaman entered, he saluted all respectfully, and turned to the magistrate with a pleading smile, as much as to say—"Look here, my good seigneur—I am poor and without a friend. Don't bear too hard upon me, for I am a stranger."

"Have you an interpreter for him, or shall I speak in French?"

"There is no need, M. l'Avocât," said the Père, in good English. "I have spoken your tongue since a boy. I have fished upon your coasts, and worked with your brave sailors—sea *dogues*." Put aside the accent, the tongue was good enough.

"You will understand all we say?"

"Without doubt. You will not detain me long?"

"We hope not," said the magistrate, kindly enough; "but we have a grave charge against you."

There will be no need to reproduce every question and answer. The following was the result of his examination:—

"But you were with her upon that day, and the last person seen near the house."

The sailor smiled, as much as to say, "That may be."

"But that does not prove, M. l'Avocât," he said, "that I struck the blow. Why should I kill her? I loved her, sir—loved her. Do you know what love is?"

"If you loved Estelle Martin so much, how is it that you and she have lived separately so long? She has resided some years at Kensal-Green, and you have been but once or twice near her."

"It was because I loved her that I left her," said the sailor, paradoxically. "A man cannot live with a wife he loves, if his honour forbids him."

"Love and honour! A poor fisherman absolutely understanding and talking of such abstractions," thought the magistrate. "Now, if I looked upon the poor as some men do, I should at once condemn this man as a liar and a hypocrite." But he gave no tongue to his thoughts, saying merely, "Go on, tell us all you know of this."

"The Widow Martin," said the old fellow, with a sigh, looking down at the ground, and then at his own strong hands, "was no widow at all—she was my wife. It is thirty years ago, monsieur, since I fell in love with her. She was a fine, beautiful girl—as beautiful as are our girls by the sea coast. We call them the *belles anges de Normandie.* She walked like a gazelle, trippingly. She had a carriage like a hawk; eyes full of wit, brightness, and fire. I fell in love with her. Alas! what could I do? My father did not like the family, and warned me against her. But I thought he was wrong. I have learnt, monsieur, now that I am a father myself, that other fathers may be sometimes right. However, I told him that, if Estelle was headstrong, marriage would tame her; that I was young, and had saved some money, and had a nice boat. I courted her, and she received me as she did *les autres.*"

"She had other sweethearts, then?"

"Yes—would that some one else had been the *fiancé!* However, we were promised to each other. I bought her some long gold earrings, and a beautiful cross of gold—for she was fond of Church then; and"—here the old fellow heaved a pathetic sigh—"we were married. We were happy for a little time; but love, Monsieur l'Avocât, is always one-sided, like a boat in a gale of wind. Either the husband loves too much, or the wife does. With us, it was the husband. I fancied that I could have managed Estelle, and have made her obey me. I found, however, that she made me obey her. You see, Estelle was too fond of pleasure and of dress. I do not blame her, poor thing. The fisher folk have a hard life. She cared little for the boat—a beautiful boat, named after her; it is patched, and worn, and old now—and wanted to go to fairs, and *fêtes*, and dances. I was foolish, and let her go. I was young and thoughtless. Pleasure, and fairs, and *fêtes* do not earn money, but make one spend it. We grew poor. I borrowed money from my father, the old Père Martin. *I* am the Père Martin now."

There was a pathos in these words. How few of us like to stand alone! The boy who fancies that his father is a great and happy man hardly realises the fact that his father feels that he is alone, with none to advise him, and with all looking to him for assistance and advice; that he stands facing the dark future, the first in the course of nature to be pushed off this narrow strip, which we call Life, into the unknown ocean that surrounds us, which we name Eternity.

"The old father lent me money, and also some reproaches. I repaid him neither. One was soon spent—the other I forgot. What then? We wanted more money. The father had not any more to lend us—and, indeed, soon died, leaving some of his money to a good priest, and some to my brother. The money was better there than in my hands, for nothing prospered. I sold *Estelle*—I mean my boat. With that money we lived for some time; when Estelle, my wife, reproached me, called me a weak fool, and said that if I could not get money she would. She was *un esprit fort.*

"We then had a baby born—a little girl. I was terrified

by my Estelle's threats, and asked her what she meant. She laughed, and spoke of some friend of hers, whom she used once to flirt with. This friend was a certain M. Gustave Flahault —a Swiss, I believe—*un brave homme*, very well formed, clean, and gentlemanly, who was valet to a great English nobleman —Milord Chesterton. This Gustave had visited us in our cottage; had noticed us in our fall and our poverty; and had proposed to Estelle that she should nurse the child of this great nobleman, and thus add money to our poor house. He was a very kind man, no doubt; but he brought misery to me. Alas! monsieur, it is many years ago. He is dead. Well, after a time I agreed. I was fond of my little child, my sweet Estelle—as fond as I was of my boat. One I sold, and the other died. Poor *petit ange!* she is in heaven now, and looks down upon her poor father.

"Oh, sir, if you can understand the heart of a poor father when he sees his own child and that of another man drawing sustenance from his wife's bosom; when he finds the one indulged in luxury, and preferred before his own; when soft clothes wrap the one, and but coarse rags the other; when one grows fat and lusty, coarse and strong—while the other pines away and slowly dies, fading before its father's eyes; its little hands becoming so light—so light and thin; its little cheeks so white and transparent, its eyes so large and wide! *Pauvre petit ange!* it knew me and loved me, I am sure; for many a time have I rocked it to sleep on my bosom, while the usurper slept at its mother's breast. To see it die!—to reflect, M'sieur l'Avocât, on the difference between rich and poor—we who are equally the children of the same God; to know that one little flower was of the softer and gentler sex, more weak, and needing more care—*une petite vierge*, like the Mother of God herself; that the other was, or would be, a man—a man strong, rich, powerful—and, because of this, wicked; and that one was pushed out of life by the other! Ah, m'sieur! Some might have felt that to be foster-mother to a nobleman's son was an honour; but, m'sieur, we, *nous autres*, do not feel it so. They take all. Why take our children's milk and the bosoms of our wives? But there was one thing more bitter still. My child, my pure dove, my Estelle—I thank the *bon Dieu!*—had been

offered to the priest, and had been born in wedlock—blessed at God's altar: a blessed sacrament I have purely kept. The other—the invader, the interloper—was the child of a nobleman, it is true: but he was—*un bâtard!*"

The old fisherman lifted his head as he spoke, and they who listened no longer felt his story dull as he continued.

CHAPTER XL.

LE PÈRE MARTIN CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE.

THE old sailor looked round the bare, unfurnished court, as if he had relieved his mind, and his story may be thus continued:—

"My mind misgave me when the valet, Gustave, made his proposal. But poverty cannot choose what it shall do, Monsieur l'Avocât, and I consented. Estelle was joyous. She said we were doing no more than many people in Normandy did, and that it was always lucky to get the nurse child of a great person. The English milord, too, was said to be very rich, as all the English are. And yet I have found many poor persons in England. Well, the child was brought. I have told you the result. My child died, but the *nourisson* lived! This seemed rather to please Estelle. She cared little for me now, and was often out on a visit with M. Gustave and the great nobleman, who was the father of the child, and who was very fond of it. This was the Earl of Chesterton. Well, I could not stand this; and with the money my wife got and some I borrowed, I bought another boat, and went to sea. Although the boat was blessed by the priest, she did not prosper. I named her *Estelle*—perhaps that was the reason. I came back in two or three months, and found the *nourisson* quite a brave boy, and Estelle in a pretty cottage, and gaily dressed. When we had got comfortably seated by her stove, I saw from her affection that she wished me to do something for her. She need not have shown me any more, for she knew that I would do anything. I would have laid down my life

for her. Presently she told me that she had been to see the mother of the little baby, the *nourisson*—that foster-child as you call it—and that she was a beautiful young woman who had been married by the left hand—as they do in Germany; but that, though the marriage was good, the poor, dear child would not succeed his father. 'Poor thing!' said I, looking kindly at it; but I thought of my little Estelle. It was a fine, beautiful baby—fair and large, like your English children; while mine was small, and of a beautiful, rich, dark complexion, poor thing! The little fellow stretched forth his fat arms towards me, and smiled.

"'See, Achille,' said my wife, 'he loves you already. Will you help him to his rights?'

"'What rights?' I asked. '*Ses droits!*—are not *ses droits* all wrong, poor child?'

"'Oh! those cursed rich people,' said Estelle, 'how they will rob the poor, and make laws of marriage for themselves, and not for us.'

"'We need not speak against them, Estelle,' I answered; 'they, too, are our brothers.'

"'Well, we can help this poor babe, at least,' she answered; 'I love it as my own, and it will be a lord some day'"—here Mr Horton and Old Daylight listened with intense interest—"'and I shall have been its foster-mother, and we will both be rich, and you shall have your boat a thousand times better than the one you have, with others to work for you.'

"'But my poor little daughter—she is gone.'

"'Bah! how foolish of you. We shall have other children—a son—some day, no doubt,' said Estelle, with a laugh.

"What she said was very true, monsieur," interjected the old fisherman, gravely. "We had another child, a son. He is alive still, and wishes to marry a poor and good girl. That was why I went to his mother to beg her to give him some portion for his marriage, or a little *dot* for his bride."

"And to do a little smuggling too, you old sinner," thought Brownjohn to himself, "if all be true that César Negretti has told me. Well, time will bring all things to light. He seems to be bamboozling the beak with his long yarn. Dang it! a seaman, somehow or other, whether he is a French salt or a

British tar, can always beat your landsman to fits, the way he manages his jaw tackle."

"In that I did not succeed, sir; and I was going back empty-handed—for Estelle did not improve as she grew old. Few women do. Well, m'sieur, she had an idea that, as that child was a Frenchman, born of a French mother, on the French soil, and under a French flag, we should do him right. His father, it would seem, was very fond of him, and not so fond of the *légitime*. It was proposed by M. Gustave Flahault, inspired without doubt by the father, that we should, by some means, meet and exchange the children."

"What children?"

"Ah! I had forgotten to tell you. This Lord Chesterton, that great English nobleman, a mighty prince in his own land, had been obliged, by the laws of his country, and the truly British phlegm of his father—cold and haughty sire of a proud race—to marry an English miladi; therefore, having done so, he did not love her. You see, there is the same fall for rich and poor in the way of love. I loved Estelle, and she did not love me. This poor lady, doubtless, loved her lord, and he did not love her. We play at cross purposes in this life—at *Colin Maillard!* catch who catch can—and then where are we?"

This question, put chiefly to himself, not being answered, the old fellow continued his story.

"The matter had been fully arranged between M. Gustave and my wife. We were to have three thousand francs for the business, and a small pension beside; for the milord was rich, and could pay for his wickedness. You see, the child of the woman he so loved—for he did love her with all his heart, this proud milord!—was to be taken home by the nurse, instead of the child she nursed; for both were boys, and there was but a few days' difference between their birthdays. Poor children! they were unconscious of all this. What does it matter to one in the cradle whether he is peasant or milord? What will it matter when we are in the grave?"

"What, indeed?" thought the magistrate.

"But I was not then a *philosophe*. I could not consent that the child should be wronged.

"'Oh, Estelle,' I said, 'why did you tell me all this? I will not consent.'

"'Then it shall be done without you.'

"'*Bien*, why did you not do it, then, before I came home, and never tell me anything about it?'

"'So I should have done, only you returned just as we were preparing.'

"'It is a wicked thing.'

"'You are mistaken. What the lord has done is a wicked thing to our poor *compatriote*. Is she not as good as any Englishwoman living? I hate them—the calm, cold blondes, with their long *boucles* of hair, and their mincing gait and small mouths.'

"Then she ran about, calling out, 'Mamma, mamma,' like an English miss, till I laughed very much to see her so merry. At that, she called me a '*petit bonhomme*,' and came on my knee, and kissed me; and, *enfin*, I consented to her plan!"

Old Daylight at this, heaved a sigh of satisfaction. The old sailor had gone on so straightforwardly, that there was every probability of his coming clean out of the mire, and leaving the interesting Brownjohn in the hole. That individual, whose belief in himself never wavered, was interested in the story; but not knowing so much of its truth either as the magistrate or his rival, he kept wondering when the point of clearance, or rather of conviction, would come. For come it would, in Brownjohn's simple creed.

"You consented," said the magistrate, severely, "to a very deep piece of villainy."

"I know that, monsieur; but what was I to do? My wife would have managed it without me."

The simple way in which this was said rather annoyed the magistrate, who was losing his faith in this ancient mariner with such deep feeling and such weak resolve.

"He is like a Macbeth in humble life—more like him than ever," thought Old Daylight. "The immortal William, when he made a type, cut it so well that every impression that follows cannot be mistaken."

"And did this plan succeed?"

"You shall hear, *mon maître.* The plan was this:—The nurse of the young milord was to meet—by accident, of course, and led by Gustave, the valet—our little *nourisson* and my wife, Estelle, at a little cabaret near some village on the sea coast. For milord had his wife cunningly brought over from England, and the children were dressed alike to every stitch—their robes, hats, everything they wore. This was well ordered and managed by Gustave. When I consented, my wife was at peace, and pretended to love me for a few days. I often think that if I had not humoured her wickedness, but had been strong, and had beaten her, she would have loved me better."

"If you had given your wicked wife a precious good drubbing," thought Old Daylight, "and made her carry the brat back to Mr Gustave—that wicked serving-man—all this would not have happened, and I should never have known Mr Edgar Wade."

"But, *voilà tout!* it was written in the Book of Fate, in which the Great Napoleon—who was a wiser man than I—believed,"—said the old seaman, as an excuse; "and Estelle would do it. Well, as I said, before the day arrived she made much of me, and she sometimes let me have the baby to nurse and take with me. I was a great, big fellow then, m'sieur, and but a poor nurse; but, as I walked along the sea-shore with the little child, I thought for many an hour on the wickedness I was to consent to, and begged my wife not to do it. But what could I do? She was a woman of an iron will, and determined to work out her own affairs. She laughed at or cajoled me; and I saw it was no use. Then it was that I was guilty of a trick towards her—but let that pass; she had her secret, I had mine! Well, the day came—one of the many days on which we watched and waited, waited and watched. At last, upon this day—it was the *Dimanche,* when we ought to have gone to mass, and amused ourselves like good children afterwards—we were walking, and a storm came on, threatening rain. We took shelter with the child in the cabaret; and, presently, in comes M. Gustave, as pleased and as pleasant as any gentleman could be; and, after a time, the *bonne,* in her Normandy cap, and the pretty, smiling babe—so like the one Estelle held. The women, of course, began to talk—when will

they not, my faith ?—of children and of dresses. The children were so much alike. Then they told each other how old they were ; and again—great heavens !—how my Estelle did lie !"

The old man threw up his hands in innocent amazement at the recollected perjury of his wife.

"The weather got darker, as if it was angry with the wicked plot. M. Gustave cared not for this ; but sent for wine, and made the women drink. He plied the nurse well ; and then he offered that we should be nurses, and take the poor babes for a while ; and the women ran giggling away up-stairs. Presently they came down ; for a storm had commenced, and M. Gustave was quite prepared to give the wrong baby to each. I had noted him. The storm—for we had thunder and lightning—the noise of the elements, the confusion of the wine was enough to have dazed the young nurse ; and while she was trembling at the lightning and stilling the babe—which had begun to cry—the valet threw a cracker into the fire, which exploded and nearly frightened us to death ; for we thought a thunderbolt had fallen. I was very angry. Perhaps you have observed, Monsieur l'Avocât, that a brave man is angry when he has been frightened ; he is angry that he has permitted himself to be so. I was terribly frightened.

"'*Tonnerre de Dieu !*' I cried, 'give up, M. Gustave—I will not have it ;' and I drew my clasp-knife.

"'Have what, you fool you ?' he cried. 'You are not half the man your wife is. *Tais-toi.*'

"'I will not,' I cried. 'Give back that child.'

"'What child, Achille ?' said my wife. 'Alas ! he is mad —my husband is mad—and he thinks of our little Estelle.'

"The name made me madder.

"'No, I don't, woman,' said I, rushing at her to take the child and give it to the nurse, who stood terrified at the quarrel. I had forgotten the knife in my hand, and I looked dreadful, no doubt. All that I recollect was a cry of 'Murder !' and my wife held me back with her strong right arm, while she held the baby in her left. I heard, too, the valet, Gustave, say in a low voice to Estelle—for he was as cool as a stone—'This is beautiful. Your good man is mad drunk.' And then I felt a blow behind the right ear, and fell

forwards over a bench. When I came to my senses, my wife was bathing my head with vinegar, and weeping over me; for there were people in the room.

"'You fool,' said she, in a low tone, 'you very nearly spoilt all—did he not, M. Gustave?'

"'Yes; and nearly frightened that nurse to death. He could not have done better—he acted admirably,' said the valet, laughing. 'I hope I did not hit him hard.'

"'And the little child—the young milord.'

"'Hush!' said my wife.

"'Oh, let the interesting creature speak, madame,' added the valet; 'he could not have served us better. The storm is over, and the child and nurse are safe at home. I procured them a carriage to take them to milady, who must be terrified.'

"'And you will hold your tongue, you fool you, will you not?' said Estelle.

"I groaned within my heart; but, fool as I was, I had a secret still."

"The children were, then, changed?" asked the magistrate, eagerly.

"I can't say. I was senseless, Monsieur l'Avocât. I did not see them given back. It may be, and it may be not. But I have a sure way of knowing them; and as my wife is dead, perhaps my great Lord Chesterton may help a poor man, if he will tell his secret."

"Will you tell me privately?" asked Mr Horton, eagerly.

"I don't know, Monsieur l'Avocât," returned the old seaman, with the same sweet smile and imperturbable innocence. "I have nothing with that now. You question me as to the murder of my wife. Of *that* I will tell you all I know."

CHAPTER XLI.

"*Claudio.* Doth Heaven interpose for things of earth?
Sometimes the levin-brand strikes down the good,
And spares the guilty standing by his side!"

The Avenger, act v. sc. i.

"WELL, presentiments and dreams are fine things," said Old Daylight to himself one morning as he was dressing, and care-

fully wrapping round his neck the many yards of white handkerchief which civilisation then demanded of a man.

It will be remembered that one of the grave charges against a noble poet, made slightly anteriorly to this, was that he wore no necktie. It need not be said that, if Mr Tom Forster, when he was in trade, had dared to perpetrate such an eccentricity, he might just as well have shut up shop. There was, however, no fear of this. Mr Forster only allowed his thoughts to go free. The outer man was rigidly groomed and kept in order. Not a string, nor a button, nor the hair of the beaver hat—regularly purchased at Messrs Hall's, of Regent Circus, then a grand new establishment—was allowed to be out of place.

"Presentiments and dreams are very fine things; but I'm staggered if I know what to make of these warnings a fellow gets that are neither one nor t'other. Of course, I knew that this old fellow would not turn out to be the man; but I didn't know that he would have such a finger in the pie. There, I think that will do."

Here he finished his toilet, having adjusted a cravat, of the size and weight of a large dinner napkin, in a very careful style, and having achieved a bow in the cravat of which he had reason to be proud.

"And, after all, what a little world it is that we live in! Here's an old French fellow—one would have thought hundreds of miles away from *our* business—intimately 'allied'—as they say in this beautiful and expressive language—with one of our first families."

He paused a little; then continued—

"And here am I, as plain and as prosaic an old file as ever wore Hessians polished by Mr Hunt's blacking, living in the same house with a young fellow who, as Mr Rolt says in one of his leaders of some one else, is 'the centre of a network of romance.' Romance!—it's all about us, on'y people don't and won't see it. One man walks the street with his eyes shut; by comes another, and he *sees*. This number two tells number one what he sees, and number one tells him that he's a liar, or romancing, or something of that sort. 'He that hath eyes to see, let him see.'"

The old gentleman was near enough to the spirit of his quotation, but not to the letter, and was puzzling himself in a mental induction.

"Presentiments and dreams! What are they? Half the times that they come, we take no notice of them. What can I do with those half-formed warnings that are neither? Something"——

But that "something" was so unformed, that he could not put words to it. He was not satisfied with the turn things were taking, and merely put off his vague presentiment with the assertion that there was something in the air—something which boded no good to him. To Winifred, on the contrary, her dream—by no means a vague one—carried hope and determination. After she had breakfasted, and finished her toilet, she sought Lord Chesterton; and, withholding from him any hint of her dream, told him that her first duty was to seek her husband. Lord Chesterton, with that miserable inaction which a want of faith induces, was perplexed beyond measure, and quite unable to advise his daughter-in-law.

"Yes, my dear," he said to that lady; "of course it is your duty to seek out Philip; but I don't know how to tell you in what way you are to proceed."

"I think I can find a way," said Winifred, with simple determination. "We must consult Philip as to what steps we are to take."

The Earl passed his hands over his eyes in his weary way. He did not clearly see how he was to advance.

"Had we not better leave all this," he asked, "to Mr Edgar Wade, who has so kindly promised to undertake it for us? He was here with me till very late at night, and was, I can assure you, casting about on all sides for the best means of defence."

But Winifred did not appear satisfied with Edgar Wade's defence.

"We can, surely," she said, "consult others!"

"Whom else?" asked the Earl, wearily. "We must debate this family disgrace with half the town!"

"Not so, my lord. There is Mr Horton, who knows as much, or more, than we know, and who will be sure to give us the best advice."

"Alas! he is bound by his office to take a view which is antagonistic to our own."

"Not so; an impartial view, if you like. Mr Horton is a just man. I would trust my life, my honour, even my Philip, in his hands."

"Perhaps you are right, my dear," returned the Earl, dreamily. "You may go to him. I cannot accompany you myself, but Mrs Preen or Mr Roskell shall accompany you."

It was not from any disrespect to Mrs Preen, but rather that Winifred was weak enough to feel that the presence of a man was somewhat of a protection—for which feeling, no doubt, the masculine part of the second sex of man will thoroughly despise her—that Mr Roskell was summoned to provide a private, but hired vehicle, to take Winifred to Mr Horton's office. Roskell creaked up the stairs, looking as usual. Although severely exercised by the cloud which had fallen upon what he called "our house," that worthy retainer was too well-bred to let any one see that anything was the matter. He had thrown an amount of cheerfulness into his honest face which did both Winifred and the Earl much good to see. He entered at once into the business, and was, indeed, glad to do anything for the fair young lady who was Philip's wife. There was so much movement and ready willingness about him, that the Earl could not help noticing it, and, with a little alteration of Wolsey's celebrated speech, saying to himself—that if he had only served Heaven with half the alacrity that his servants showed to him, this trouble would not have so plagued him now. It was arranged, therefore, that Winifred should go and consult Philip, while Lord Chesterton remained at home awaiting Edgar Wade.

"The carriage waits, my lady," said Mr Roskell, shortly.

The time did not seem long. Nothing had since passed between father and daughter: the Earl had been determinately silent, and Winifred held him in too much awe to question him about matters which were so near to her heart. In those days, when miniature broughams were not, and a one-horse close carriage would have been looked upon with scorn and reproach, it was rather difficult to pick out any vehicle which did not look tall and imposing; but Roskell had managed to secure a doctor's town

chariot of a dark colour; and mounted on the box beside the driver, and armed with a huge umbrella to hold over my lady in her passage to and from the coach, he formed an appropriate body-guard. Mr Horton received the young lady with that courteous politeness, that deference to woman simply because of her sex, which then existed, and which is now a thing of the past. Of course, if we look at it philosophically, this charming manner, which then distinguished the true gentleman, was only a refined and elaborate insult, intended to put woman in mind that she was not a man. But in those days ladies did not view matters through that dissolving glass of all beautiful illusions, which we call "Social Science"—rather should we not call it *un*social science? Winifred gathered comfort from Mr Horton's looks, though he had little himself. He told her that a second person had been arrested—

"The real murderer?" cried Winifred.

"That remains to be seen," returned the magistrate; and his answer told the young lady that nothing had yet been "elicited"—to use a phrase which was a favourite in the elaborate articles of Mr Barnett Slammers.

"Was there a murder at all?" asked Lady Wimpole, as if a bright idea had occurred to her. "It might have been a suicide!"

Mr Horton shook his head. The evidence, which he well knew, did not admit of that—indeed, it all pointed to one person; but the magistrate was not cruel enough to tell Winifred *that*.

"And where is Philip, my husband? I must see him, and at once."

"Lord Wimpole was safely 'lodged' with a friend of his," returned Mr Horton, taking the liberty to give Captain Chesman—the governor of the gaol—the brevet rank of "friend."

"I must see him," persisted Winifred.

Mr Horton shook his head.

"Listen to me," said the lady, looking very calm, and putting the auxiliary verb last, as we all do, Gentle or Simple, to give force to her sentence: "unless I am kept from him by main force, see him I will!"

Upon this, Mr Horton struck his colours; and, under pretext

of giving Winifred a letter of introduction to the gallant Waterloo officer in command of his Majesty's strong-place at Clerkenwell, wrote out an order for her admission to visit the *detenu*.

"You will promise me not to stay long?" said George Horton, looking into the young, clear eyes of Winifred, with all his old love purified and refined into the sublimated essence of true friendship. "For your own sake—for mine—for *his*."

Aye, that was the more potent syllable! Winifred gave her promise; and attended to the coach by the magistrate, who saw with pleasure her body-guard mount the box, she drove rapidly away.

Philip, it needs not to be said, was delighted at the sight of his wife. He had a very comfortable room; but, as there were bars to the windows and bolts to the doors, nothing could persuade the lady that it was not a dreadful place.

"My darling," he said, looking fondly in her face, and taking her soft arms from his neck, so as to clasp both her hands as he sat by her side on the sofa. "My darling, I 'm so happy."

"O Philip!" she said, "how can you be so cruel, to be happy when you are here, and away from me?"

"Because you come to me, my wife," he said; "because you prove your love."

"Why," she said, smiling, with the tears standing in her eyes, like sunshine peeping through clouds of rain, "every woman would do that for her husband."

"I believe they would, dear," replied he, lifting her hand and kissing it with a sweet respect. "They are so good, if we only knew it, and only trusted them. But now I have proved what was only theory, you know. And we jealous men are so foolish as to ask proof of that of which we are most certain—of the goodness of women and of God!"

"Hush!" she said, kissing his lips, so as to stop his mouth. "Yes, He is good, my Philip; He will not desert us, though He has plagued us with this trial."

"Thought us worthy of trial, you mean, Winifred. How many men pass life without any great sorrow and any trouble? —ordinarily successful, petted with the good things of the

world, because they are unable to bear sorrow. And ours, after all, is but little."

"O Philip!" said the wife, "you teach me how to bear sorrows."

"If I do, my love, that is as it should be. I am the head of this sad household, which has nothing left but those who sit here: us two, Winifred. And this, too, makes me happy. After this trial, my dear, if all proves well—as I hope it will—we will go to America, to that far-stretching country where Man—great only by himself, with no false honour from the o'erprized deeds of those who lived before him, not mounted high upon the accident of birth—can lift his forehead to the morning sky which bends o'er half a world of free-born men owning no masters but themselves and God!"

He rose as he said this, proudly and with determination, and seemed to Winifred a firmer, stronger man than she had seen him.

"We will, darling—we will," she said, catching a little of his enthusiasm.

"And we shall need no adventitious aid to make us known and honoured. No people will come to us, to bow down to place and not to us; no one will feign a love because we have a high-born name. Our honest deeds shall be our ancestry."

"My noble Philip," she said; "my knight, my true one. You do not mind this cruel blow. How great, how good of you!"

"Not so, my wife," throwing so much love in the name that she rose to him, and placed her heart against his to catch some of the enthusiasm of his deep affection. "You do not know what a coward I was; how, on the night he told me"——

"He? You mean Edgar Wade?"

"The same—who, if all be true, is the right Lord Wimpole."

"It cannot be true," murmured Winifred, "it cannot be true. I do so hate and dread that man."

"Alas! my darling, you must bear the trial well. I am afraid it is true. Let it be so: we will at least argue as if it were. Those papers were not forgeries, nor did the Earl of Chesterton deny them—he could not do so."

Winifred shuddered at the thought. How complicated were the meshes which held her love in prison and in danger.

"But I must confess, my love," continued Philip, "that on that night on which I first heard all, I was shaken and dismayed. You only gave me true courage. Disinherited as I was"——

"Disinherited, my dear," she answered, pressing more closely to him, "but not disgraced."

"Made me feel," he continued, as he looked into the two deep wells of love she called her eyes, "how high I yet stood, even when I had fallen."

It was his turn now to press her close to him. Their voices —full of deep affection—had sunk to a whisper; they spoke little, and they spoke low. Not one word was said of guilt, or of the dreadful trial which awaited them, then. Their happiness was supreme. They had gone through the fire which makes love pure, and had stood the test.

"O Philip," murmured Winifred, after a time; "I never felt so happy in my life!"

"Nor I," he answered, softly. "Till now, I did not even know what happiness was like."

After some time—a short time, perhaps, but love made it remembered as a long, long space—she said—

"He is to defend you, Philip. Can you trust him, dear?"

"God will defend *us*, Winifred," he answered, as if they were both upon their trial.

"Yes, love; He will not desert us, nor," she added, with a single sigh, "give us further grief."

"Except for our good," said Philip, cheerily. "Sometimes He wills it so, that we may bear all well, and yet not escape. But bear up, and hope for aid and comfort—hope for it, darling! Why, we have it in our love."

The allotted time fled away: how quickly it had passed! Captain Chesman, with a military step, and with quite sufficient noise to make his guests aware that he approached, opened the door as if to ask some trivial question. Philip took the hint; and Winifred, far more sustained and happier than when she came, left her husband where he was so securely lodged and so well looked after. She hurried back to the carriage, attended by the faithful steward; and was happy in the recollection of every word and look of Philip, until she was driven into the courtyard of Chesterton House.

"Was the Earl at home?" she asked of Mr Checketts, who received her.

"Yes, my lady; and in close consultation with Mr Edgar Wade."

"I will go and see them."

"He was not to be disturbed."

"Never mind that. Tell him I come directly from Lord Wimpole."

"Aye, that I will," said Checketts to himself, as he hurried up the stairs.

CHAPTER XLII.

DR RICHARDS ELECTRIFIES HIS PATIENT.

THERE are very few men bold enough to face the consequences of their own acts; and the timidity which guilt or folly breeds has this peculiarity, that it increases with the length of time which has elapsed since the committal of the crime or folly. Thus sin, which "drags at each remove a lightning chain," has also the miraculous power of making the chain stronger as it grows longer. Even the virtuous Mr Eugene Aram, it is said, manifested a great deal of horror and alarm at entering the cave wherein the bare skeleton of his victim lay. In short, it is comfortable to reflect that an error, as Fullar has it, can never by increase of years become truth, but "rather the more damnable error;" and that the father of all lies and errors—or, to speak more plainly, the devil—*is* an ass! Lord Chesterton was by no means unwilling to listen to the advice of his son—whom we know as Edgar Wade—and to keep away from visiting that cunning and deceitful creature who had so long kept Edgar from his rights. Edgar Wade had returned to the subject when he again visited his father; and he had thrown out, in his casual yet effective way, the hint that it would be useless to see this poor lady until the dreadful accusation now hanging over the house was dismissed.

"Perhaps you are right," said the Earl. "Whatever is right I am willing to do. We have enough sorrow and trouble on hand."

"Quite so, my lord; quite so. But it is astonishing how these troubles will pass if we take them one by one. When a man is attacked by three men, if they will only observe *that* rule of honour, he will conquer; for, if he be strong, he may endure, and be more than a match for them singly. I merely mention this in regard to something you said yesterday. The subject was hardly worth recurring to. The poor lady is, besides, dreadfully ill."

Dreadfully ill, indeed!—barely clinging on to life, the body living, but on the mind; living, as it will, mysteriously, for some purpose; for Dr Richards, a man of science, rather than of faith, had pronounced her scientifically dead for some time.

"I am deeply grieved to hear it," said the Earl, slowly, and in a low tone; as if, while he was speaking, he was realising her position.

His mind flew back to the days when a cloud would seem to have fallen on his life if Eugenie were but ill; when, if even her finger ached, his would have ached also; when, if the doctor had told him that her life were in danger, he would have turned cold in dread, and have watched and prayed night and day at her bedside. And now she was alone! Alone! save for one whose presence made her seem more solitary still. A nurse, whose hire was her sense of duty—who would carry the few pounds she had earned to her convent, for her account in heaven—who, while she tended her, said prayers, and was engaged in "making her own soul" while her patient lay dying—who looked upon her attendance as an extra penance, and who might be more holy, but was not half so comfortable nor comforting as one of the homely old nurses—widow and else—who hire themselves week by week, and who pour out gossip, hope, and consolation with each draught they give. How utterly alone was Eugenie! Son and *husband* had both fled. Youth and beauty had gone, too; as if they were like human friends, and kept with her only while all was sunshine weather; and helplessness, sickness, and worn age—a sad Trinity—sat at her couch and waited on her days. How many a woman's fall is like to hers! To how many are the few short fleeting years of youth, the only time of happiness and love!

"I am very much grieved to hear it," repeated the old Earl, more sadly.

"She played the game that women often play," returned Edgar, thinking bitterly of his own love, "and lost."

"Lost! indeed she did. In the game of life, women often do lose, matched against men—such men, too, as there are," returned Lord Chesterton, warmly. "I have wronged her. I should beg her pardon, if I should wish to die in peace."

"I am afraid," returned the barrister, "that your lordship thinks more generously than the world does. But," he added, seeing that the Earl was silent, "Mrs Wade has been so long speechless, that if you were to see her, your visit would be thrown away."

The Earl shuddered as his son said this; and it was at this juncture that Winifred entered, having heard the last sentence. As there was little love lost between the barrister and the lady, for the very good reason that he had attacked her husband's interests—for it cannot be supposed that instinct or perception had anything to do with the matter—it was enough for Winifred to understand, which she did at once, that Edgar Wade had been persuading the Earl to stay away, to make Winifred urge him at once to see Mrs Wade. It was, therefore, with a little rising at her throat, and a quick and hurried movement, that Winifred, gaining the Earl's side, spoke and said—

"Mr Wade will excuse me, I am sure; but time presses. I have been to see Philip"—she added, "Lord Wimpole," in a patronising and explanatory tone, to the barrister—"and he is so happy, my lord. I went to comfort him, and he comforts me."

"I am glad his lordship has such good spirits," said the barrister, drily.

"He is full of hope and faith, my dear lord," said Winifred, not heeding the interruption. "He knows that this foul accusation will soon be disposed of."

"I wish he would tell us how," retorted Edgar. "I confess that, from the view the law is likely to take of it, I am puzzled."

"He wishes you—I am sure he wishes you," urged Winifred, again appealing to the Earl—"to bear up, and to be of good

cheer. All will yet be well. And Mr Horton, too, he by no means desponds; and he is a brave and skilful man, one of experience and knowledge."

"We are, indeed, glad to hear it," answered the barrister, somewhat cheerfully. "I shall be delighted to be counselled by such a man as Mr Horton."

Winifred ignored him, but was still fondling the hands of the Earl between her own, and evidently making up her mind for an effort. The effort was made; its result was a little white lie—the whitest, surely, ever made for the sake of a husband!

"And—I really must not forget his one earnest *wish*"—she had desired to say message, but by the wisdom of woman she was counselled to a subterfuge—"it was, that you should at once see Madame Wade."

Edgar started. For a moment, his large dark eyes seemed to close and grow smaller. Then he spoke—

"We have been talking about that," he answered. "I fear it would be injudicious for the Earl to do so."

"I do not see that," said Winifred, eagerly. "She may know something about this."

"She cannot. The very news of the crime smote her with this strange disease. She has been unconscious ever since."

Winifred steeled her heart against the barrister. Unconscious! she did not believe it, and was almost saying so. She doubted every word that man said.

"She may appear unconscious," she answered. "Perhaps she has no one to whom she cares to speak, poor thing!"

The tone of pity brought back his sad recollections to the Earl. After all, Winifred's suggestions were not unlikely. Her secret discovered—all passing from her—and she alone bearing the weight of guilt; it was not unlikely.

"I have not been neglectful of her, madame," returned the barrister, haughtily. He could see that between him and Winifred there must be a passage of arms. "I have done all that can be done. She is attended by the best physician—my friend, Dr Richards—and a fit and proper nurse, one skilled in nursing—a religious lady."

"I beg your pardon," said Winifred, eagerly. "I am so glad that the poor lady is well looked after."

Edgar Wade bowed, stiffly and grimly, at this little *amende.*

"I know Dr Richards very well," said Winifred; "he used to attend to my aunt. He is a very skilful man, indeed; that will be all the better. We will go and see her, and at once—will you not, my lord?"

"As you will, my dear," said the old nobleman, rising. "I am ready."

Somehow, Edgar Wade—of course, in the interest of his client—was unwilling that this interview should take place.

"This interview, my lord," he said, "will be very *mal à propos.* I do not myself see what good can come of it, nor how you intend to approach one who is so seriously—who is, in fact, unconscious."

"Then there is not a moment to be lost," said Winifred. "Your reasons, Mr Wade, make rather for than against Lord Chesterton's visit. He would bitterly regret during all his life if he did not now go and see her. In a very short time it may be too late; and then, whatever his desire may be, how strongly soever he may wish and pray to see her, it will be useless."

"Too late—too late," thought the old nobleman; "too late to see my Eugenie! What would I have said if I had heard those words long ago?"

Then, turning to Winifred, he spoke—

"You are right, my dear; let us go at once. The carriage is ready. We can drop Mr Wade at Mr Horton's house in Wimpole Street, if we go that way."

"Very good," said the barrister, without appearing chagrined. "At the worst, you will only have lost your time. I presume that her nurse will not allow her to receive a shock that can be at all harmful. I only regret that your lordship, who must be full of one trouble, should undertake another."

"Lady Sark used to say," observed Winifred, as the three passed down the wide staircase of the house, preceded by Mr Roskell, who had a carriage duly ready—as all things were in that well-managed house—"that troubles always came thick and threefold; and that the only blessing of that was, that one drove out another."

"That was taking rather a cheerful view of matters, for her ladyship," returned Lord Chesterton. "I suppose they do—I suppose they do."

Mr Wade probably thought that upon this matter his old friend would have quoted Shakespeare—

> "When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
> But in battalions."

But he contented himself with sitting in silence and in gloom at the back of the family chariot, which rolled softly onwards to Wimpole Street. Having arrived there, he duly stopped at Mr Horton's modest house, and the coach took on its freightage to Queen Anne Street. The eccentric old gentleman who owned the mansion was not at home; and the eager and intrusive housekeeper, who watched his outgoings and his incomings with so much anxious care, flew up to the street door when she heard the ponderous knock of the Chesterton footman waking up the echoes of the tall house and the quiet street.

"God bless the man!" she cried, "he will knock the house down. That comes of the old gentleman not allowing me to tie up the knocker with a black kid glove. He says it 's unlucky. Not more unlucky than a white kid, I 'm sure. One brings death and the other life—leastways, they shows as death or life have been visitin' the 'ouse. And which is luckier? Says he, 'No one comes 'ere with their thunderin' knocks;' an' he 's no sooner turned his back on the 'ouse, but here they is. Well, that 's a fine chariot—too fine for the doctor. Besides, he 's here."

This she said as she ducked on the landing to get what she called a "squint" through the windows at the side of the door. The footman announced the Earl in so subdued a way—as if conscious of having made by far too much noise—and that nobleman and Lady Winifred entered in so gentle a way, that the housekeeper was mollified, and set no bar to the entrance of the nobleman and the lady to the chamber of the sick woman.

"She was very ill," she said, in one of those dreadful whispers which echo so, and which seem to float about a sick house—"very ill, indeed. The doctor was stoppin' with her some time this mornin'. He had brought a hinstrument with him."

There is something terribly vague and horrible about the word "instrument," when used in connection with an invalid. Poor Winifred shuddered as if it were a guillotine; but it was nothing half so dreadful. Dr Richards, eminently in advance of his medical brethren, had merely brought a galvanic battery —a somewhat rude instrument compared with our finer pieces of mechanism, but one which was sufficient for his purpose. So it was, that when, full of dread and tremor, the Earl and Winifred crept up-stairs into the chamber of the sick, which lay at the back of Edgar Wade's study, they found the Sister of Charity slowly dropping her beads, and looking with wonder on the stout, earnest, rough-haired little doctor, who, with his battery on the table, was prepared to strike the spark. Two bent and twisted wires ran from the table to the hands and the head of the invalid, who—pale as death, her beautiful black hair streaming on her pillow, her hands white as paper and as thin as those of a skeleton—lay quite motionless on the bed.

"Stop a bit," whispered the doctor to Winifred, as she entered first. "Stop a bit"—he spoke as if he had known her for years. "Now, you are just in time to see a wonderful experiment—that is, if you have never seen it before. I could not have found a more beautiful subject." The doctor used "beautiful" as "fit." "There she is, neither alive nor dead; hasn't spoken for nearly a week. You see that wire round the back of her head? There's where I think we shall do good. But quite a chance. Never was such an excellent chance for proving Galvani's theory, that 'electricity is life.'"

The Earl's heart beat violently, his head was bent down, as he entered the room of the dying woman. As he did so, the disc of the electric machine was whirled rapidly round, and a little sparkle fluttered, like a blue Psyche, for a moment on its edge. The invalid shuddered, and, with a slight start, spoke in a voice so low, so tremulous, and so plaintive, that from the eyes of Winifred and the Earl tears fell; while the Man of Science and the Woman of Religion looked on with stoical indifference, saving that Dr Richards' face seemed lit up with joy at the success of his experiment.

"O Philip!—my old love! I have waited long for this. *You have come at last!*"

"You see, the eyes don't open. She knows you, sir, evidently. That's hardly electricity—that's a more delicate and more subtle fluid yet, that touches her brain—*that's* the secret of that much-maligned physician, Dr Mesmer. Here, nurse—wine! wine! Pour a glass of champagne down her throat—don't give her broth and slops—and we will save her yet!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"*Leonora.* Sinful am I, but not compact of sin.
Though Satan charges me with many darts,
But *one* shall wound."

—*Marion Colonna*, act ii. sc. iii.

"WINE, wine!—we will save her yet!" cried the doctor.

Heavens above us! what an anxiety and bustle, what a straining of hope and of nerve, what a motion and an eagerness, to save life—*one* life! As if at other times we were not as ready to throw away lives by the thousand! For the sake of science—rather, cynics might say (but cynics *are* such queer fellows!), for the sake of himself—the good Dr Richards was as eager in attempting to bolster up the fleeting existence of Mrs Wade as a man well could be who was hunting, let us say, or pursuing any object, fame or wealth, or ambition of any sort. The eager little man, putting his arm round the thin, wasted form of the invalid, lifted her up, made the *religieuse* arrange the pillows, and himself poured, slowly and carefully, some very old port down the throat of poor Eugenie. The good Sister dropped her beads when Eugenie spoke. She had been so long silent, that the nurse had grown accustomed to the dumb woman she attended to, and whose lips she wetted with brandy and water; and she had so quietly made her own soul in her constant prayers as she moved noiselessly about the room, that Mrs Wade was forgotten, save as some necessary piece of furniture. So in this world we become the property of each other. "I have said so many *aves*, so many *credos*. Let me see—what must I do? Oh, I must attend to my invalid."

"*My* invalid!" Poor Eugenie had faded out of life, and

had not a holding even in herself. The wine seconded the effect of the electric fluid in a marvellous way. The most admirable and subtle spirit, alcohol—the most absurdly abused of all God's creations, the thing which sets free the true nature of man, and then is credited by the ungrateful creature with having *caused* the crimes which it gave him the courage to commit—coursed through the veins of Eugenie, and made her tremble into something like reanimation.

"It is wondrous, is it not," whispered the doctor to his on-looking friends, "that when one who has lived simply and purely, as this lady has, and who has no organic disease, some little action like that of electricity and alcohol will give her life? You see, it has a mechanical effect—it is like shaking a watch when a particle of dust stops it. And yet, if this lady had been under the hands of Dr Dash or Dr Blank, he would have drenched the life out of her with Physic!—Physic! Half a glass more, Sister," he said, after a pause; during which the lips of the patient opened, and the faintest of faint glows rose to her throat and cheeks.

"There—that will be enough. She wishes to speak, and the strength will come very soon."

So indeed it did. The poor lady trembled all over, with a delicate shudder; and then, with a smile that was far sadder than a tear, spoke—

"Philip," she murmured—"Philip, I know you are here. Speak to me—speak to me once more, as once you did!"

The Earl, sinking upon his knees at the foot of the bed, had been all the time a prey to such emotions of awe, of strong trouble, and remorse, as one may be supposed to feel when he witnesses one whom he has wronged and loved risen from the dead.

"Eugenie!" he answered.

Age, disappointment, the wear of the world, the wrongs of misprized love, were all forgotten; and the tones sounded as freshly as in youthful days, when they struck upon the dying woman's ears. As when the murmuring wind reaches an Æolian harp, and dies away upon the strings it renders eloquent with music, the same sad tone is caught by the hearts of those who listen—so the little company around the bed

seemed attuned to the nature of this sad shrift between the lovers. Nor did the wasted form of the one, and the bowed and whitened head of the other, serve to detract in any way from the freshness and reality of the love. For misfortune and the wintry cold of disappointment have this merit, that they seem to arrest one's existence at the very time it falls, and the lack of fruition thus prevents the increment of age. How many an old man is there who still remains in his heart as young as he was when that heart bent down, never to rise again, at the grave of his dead love? How many a woman lives—mature, but yet a girl in heart—who cherishes the feeling which she had when her love was lost at sea—never to be heard of more, but never to be forgotten? In some old books of household recipes, there is one which is said to arrest the development of a rosebud in midsummer, and to keep it fresh and green, so that, with careful tending and due warmth, it shall blossom in midwinter. The experiment is, perhaps, never successful, and hence the simile is the more true. The bud remains a bud, and never becomes a rose, but it withers in the form in which it is gathered; and so the human heart remains unchanged, except by the slow decay which, while it cheats with the promise of a future summer, keeps it with the semblance of youth, and visibly almost unaltered.

"Eugenie, my Eugenie!"

The remembered voice, the old, fond tones, swept like the dying wind the chords of the poor lady's heart, and brought with them the memories of old days, and of the cherished love. Her eyes were still closed, but all her senses seemed preternaturally acute. A smile of delight—radiant and bright, and pure as winter sunshine—lit up her features; and she spoke—

"We were so happy," she said; "so young, and both so innocent. We lived but for each other, Philip; and you, in your fond passion, were as true as I. What was the world to us? What were its vanities, its empty pomp, its cruel, false ambitions? We lived but for each other; and every passing day, swift as it went when winged by joy and love, made us dearer to each other.

"We had no bargaining, no buying, nor cheating, no chaffering with our love; but gave ourselves to each other—a boy

and girl—never dreaming of deceit which we could not comprehend. And although the glory of that morn of love has been succeeded by a sudden long dark night, it never faded to the light of common day—was never ruined by mean doubts, nor fretted by everyday cares and follies; but has remained a pure, sweet memory through all these years of sorrow.

"Do you remember our first meeting, love?—our first confession, and the innocent kiss which sealed the mutual tender of our hearts each to the other? Do you remember the long summer days of our journey to be married in Prussia? I was your wife by the left hand—that was all, you told me, that you could give me; and I believed you, and was content, since you were a great noble, and I the daughter of a poor French *émigrê*, an artist. I knew I had your heart. I knew the vows I offered up to God were true. I trusted that He would accept them.

"If we sinned—and the deep punishment of after-days will make us read in it God's judgment of our love, my Philip, which was too tenderly and too exclusively our own; too human, warm, and joyous of this life—we sinned at least in love, not hate; from generous impulse, not from sordid desires and faithless love of the world. But this we knew not then. You lifted me from a life of trial and of care to one of comfort and of plenty, in its modest way. You enabled me to aid my father in his years of want, disease, and old age; and to lay my poor mother in an honoured grave. To you the retirement of our little house at Passy—with its tiny garden where the sweet birds sang, and where the violets grew, and the sun came, it seemed to me, earlier and lingered later than in Paris streets—might have seemed but poverty. To me it was a fairy palace. I remember now the paper on the walls of our little *salon*, which gave its windows to our garden; our little bed-room, fitted in the English style; our kitchen, where our servant—a grave, honest, pious Norman—sat and told our beads, and wondered at our love—which rejoiced her heart and seemed to her, as she said, like some sweet fairy tale, which she read all day and dreamed of in the night.

"I remember, too, almost every word you said: your noble sentiments, your generous disregard of self, your every action;

not one angry word, not one clouded look in all those days of love; not one expression of being tired or wearied of my fond love;—not one sentence but that which an English gentleman might use to a lady far above him! Can you wonder that I loved you?

"You were of that generous people which—when at war with my country, and suffering grievous wrong from her—received my father, and thousands like him, and aided him in all his struggles, and gave him life and hope.

"And I, a girl, had an hereditary love for our noble enemies, and yet our friends, the English. I loved their language, their stately poems, and their calm yet warm manners. In you I found my ideal—no slave of passion, yet so full of life and love; no empty braggart, but so strong in action; no dreamer, yet so generous in thought. Oh, my Philip! you were my all, and you were worthy—ay, in spite of untruth, wrong, and fate."

Here the poor lady paused awhile, and the doctor gave her some more wine and water.

"Let her speak," he said, softly—and his two bright, hard, and scientific brown eyes were brighter for the moisture that was in them,—"Let her speak as long as she will. This has been long upon her poor heart; it will do her good to say her say, poor woman."

Winifred had crept nearer to the sufferer, and had caught one hand, and fondled it and kissed it. In the picture of the father she recognised the traits of her own Philip; and had not Eugenie been full of sorrow and ill-health, which was quite a sufficient reason to attract this young lady's love, she would have loved her for the sad sweet voice and the full-hearted memory of her own young love. The good little nurse, looking up with saintly eyes from under the cold shade of her white *cornette*, told her beads with fervour, and, it may be, thanked God that she had escaped this trial and this sorrow caused by human passions. Was she right? I hardly know. Is the soldier better who has not joined the fight? It may be so; but surely the thankfulness which arises from past trial and trouble is better than that which boasts an isolated safety. The same sweet smile again flickered upon the thin, pale fea-

tures, as if some pleasant memory had lit up a lantern which had long been dark.

"Do you remember, Philip," she said, "how we wandered in the Louvre, and in Versailles, and how you made each picture memorable by describing it to me, telling me of the story of my country, and never using one hard word against us: pointing out how we had fought at Fontenoy and Ivry, your face glowing with admiration for the gallant deeds of knights, or your eyes dimming with moisture as you recounted some heroic deed which led to death?

"Sooner or later, all paths lead to death, my Philip! The world we reck so much of is death's antechamber; and long have I waited in it. I am now near the door, and would bid you good-bye."

The face was more solemn, but still hopeful, as she spoke. Then the tone changed.

"How often have I since stood in those pleasant palaces, and recalled those words! Surely, if men knew the love that women bear them, they would never use one harsh phrase towards them. The memory has been a pleasant one, and has kept me alive during a long trial.

"And, alas! what a price we mortals pay for love, for comfort, and for joy! Thirty years!—for thirty years, and the light of my life gone out, leaving me half dead and darkling.

"The blow was too severe for me to attempt to defend myself, or to recover from it. I could only gather what comfort there was in prayer, and in my child—our child, my Philip!"

Winifred listened even more eagerly than before, and pressed the thin hand more closely. The Earl gazed at the dying woman even more intensely; and the doctor, raising her form gently, gave her some more refreshment. After a short pause, the patient, with a sadder tone, and the tears gently dropping one by one from her closed eyes, continued—

"The trial had not changed me, my dear sweet love, nor had it broken me. I determined still to endure. I took the punishments, as some good priests tell us to take them, as a recompense for the greater pleasures we had known as a trial and a test, a warning that we should not forget God. Heaven help me!—life is at best a trial, when we hardly dare be happy

except in the dreamlike illusions of our youth. I trusted your love, Philip, even though you were married to your English wife. I never flinched, nor failed, nor doubted. I was rewarded. But oh, the bitter sweet! You proved your love by urging me to be dishonest to your other child. With all the eloquence which a pent-up, unsatisfied love could give you, you tried to persuade me to do wrong. I resisted for a long time—for a long, long time."

"You did, Eugenie! God knows you did. You were better and wiser than I was. You set before me the folly of the wrong, but I could not be persuaded."

"My dear!" murmured the poor sick lady, "God permits some of us to yield to sin, because we do not trust Him. I was about to yield, when I went to confession, and sought comfort in the words of the good father who directed my prayers. He knew not of you, for I did not tell him all. He showed me a way out of the horrible pit, even if it was for the first and only time in my life"——

"The first and *only* time!" The Earl breathed more quickly, and awaited with anxious ears, as if he divined what was coming.

"Even, then, if I deceived you. You urged me to change the children. You sent to me your Normandy nurse with my little boy, rosy with country air and tanned with sea breezes. He was to be, like you, the great Earl of Chesterton. But then he would have been, like you, tempted, set up high, and born to miserable alliances of family and of pride, never to know the truth. I looked for smaller paths and quieter ways for our child, my Philip. My heart revolted at the trial for my boy. I could not consent. Your nurse—a creature only won by gold—received my bribe as well as yours. You thought that you had succeeded; but my child was kept near me—as I well knew—and did not fill another place! Pardon me, Philip!"

"Thank God!—thank God!" gasped the nobleman, as if a weight had fallen from him; while Winifred, covering the thin, frail hand with grateful kisses, placed it to her own pure heart, saying—

"*He* is Lord Wimpole still!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

"He should have been a light
Shining to bless us!
But proved a storm and blight,
Sent to distress us."

—SCOTT.

"THIS is a very strange case," remarked the doctor.

"I am so thankful you are here, Dr Richards," whispered Winifred, speaking thus for her husband's sake. "You will remember what the poor lady has said?"

The doctor replied by an upward, a surprised but brilliant glance, which plainly said, "Can any one forget it?" The nurse, too, looked up, as if to testify that she also was human.

"Hush!" ejaculated the doctor at length, after a somewhat anxious pause, "she will speak again." Then he thought to himself, "The newly-recovered strength will last some time—it is useless to check her. What I dread is, the collapse after this; but if she will aid us—as of course she will, with hope before her—I think we shall pull through. Sickness of what we call heart and mind, conscience and feeling!—those are the matters which puzzle the doctor." The same strange, trembling, nervous motion passed over Mrs Wade's form and features as she again spoke, after drinking eagerly and with interest—not mere sufferance—some wine, as if she knew that it did her good, and gave her momentary strength.

"I would not have deceived you, Philip, in that; for I would have done your bidding even in wrong, but that I would not wrong another. I am sure that I have been right. I felt a better and a wiser woman afterwards. I accepted, as you know, my fate. I was not one to struggle against the decrees of Providence. We loved each other too dearly. I loved you to the forgetfulness of all—even of God; and He smote me to remembrance with a bitter blow.

"I know this nurse was true to me and false to you, by a secret knowledge that a mother has. My child remained with her, was brought up by her in his earlier years; and, alas! by that secret way of nature, of which we know so little, imbibed

strange moral poison in his foster-mother's milk. Alas! Philip, he is not what his father's son should be, nor what his mother's teachings would have made him."

Then Winifred was right. As she listened, she thanked God that in her prejudice she had not been unjust.

"But let that pass—we 'll speak of it again," continued the invalid, in her low, sweet voice, and measured cadence, so full of harmony and rhythm, that the words seemed now and then to fall into natural lines of blank verse, and to admit of scansion. "In that I did deceive you, for your good; but afterwards there came an accusation—based on some slight truth—which eager friends, your jealous fondness set to watch, brought foully against *me*. How could your faith be shaken? How could you misjudge the one you loved? The fault began in you. A victim to your father's will and pride, you did me wrong; and then added to that evil in believing that I could return the wrong to your own bosom."

The Earl groaned and sighed—now, when it was too late, fully believing what the dying woman said.

"It was in vain that I wrote to you after your cruel letter. You had shut out all chances of the error being retrieved. My letters were returned. Again I wrote; they were returned unopened. I bowed to fate. I was too proud, too much wounded—and deep sorrow has its pride as well as joy—to urge you more. I succumbed, and comforted myself by the penance I had to undergo. Why should I clear my fame to you? I asked myself; especially when a proof of my innocence would bring back your fondness, and make you unjust to and unhappy with your English wife. It has been, Philip, a martyrdom of thirty years. Heaven knows how I have passed it. It is ended now. I wore this wrong suspicion, this most odious accusation, as one who does an unseen penance wears a chain of steel or shirt of hair. They lacerate the flesh; your penance ate into my soul."

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me, Eugenie!"

"Forgiven, Philip, are you ere you ask—long loved, long cherished, long forgiven. I found that the accusation was based upon the visits of my brother, whom I had educated, with the money you had so plentifully bestowed upon me, at

St Cyr; and who—poor, brave young fellow—had won his epaulettes. He is dead now, thank Heaven for it! He will meet me where our errors are more wisely looked at than by human eyes. He was happy when he died, in some sharp fray in Africa; happy—with the name of his sister, his widowed sister, on his lips—that he gave his life to France. France—dear, sweet France! I have been long away from her, in this cold land of my adoption. My dear, sweet mother country! I did not love her well enough; but now her sunshine and blue skies come back to me so plainly, so vividly: there seems to rest once more a gleam of her bright sunshine on my bed."

The doctor well knew the meaning of this, and gave the invalid more wine. It was useless trying to stop her, or to give her rest. Rapidly the sweet voice, so low and so clear in its enunciation, poured forth its words, as if the invalid knew that she was making her last shrift in this troublous world.

"But our boy, when he came back to me, seemed to have come with an altered nature," she continued. "He grew up outwardly all that a fond mother could wish; but inwardly cold, reserved, and clever—but with that cleverness which regards only self. He worked at his tasks steadily and with industry—accumulated knowledge, but it was for himself. For years I did not let him know his history.

"He was ambitious, and chose his own career. He was determined to study the law; for he saw that in that there lay more advancement in the world than in anything else, and that he might thereby take advantage of the weakness and the follies of mankind. He said so, calmly and with purpose, to me. I hoped that, as he grew up, some strong passion of love might lay hold of him, and purify his nature; but I found that youth passed away without this relief. He never told me anything—was coldly polite to me, but never confided in me. The love which I had fondly dreamed he would, from his father's nature, shower upon me, was withheld. He was so constant at his studies, so determined to win his way. Alas! the very faultlessness which others saw in him was to my fond heart his greatest fault itself.

"At last, in an evil hour, some six months ago, thinking to move him, I told him all. I was ill then, and I fancied that

I might not live; and I thought that I should not like to die without his knowing his mother's story and his father's name.

"The revelation did not seem either to distress him or to surprise him. He heard me coolly to the end—telling him, with broken voice, the sad story of my love and my punishment."

Even here the poor dying creature said no harsh word. She might have told her cruel wrongs—and so the little group that heard her thought. Her reticence made the story more pathetic; and Lord Chesterton felt in his heart her great charity to be a blow and a reproof.

"He listened calmly, but said no word of sympathy; while he complained bitterly of the wrong done to him. Oh, how every word of his wounded me! My punishment was indeed bitter: it was more than I could bear.

"Some time after that he obtained some of the letters which you had sent me—those letters which were a proof of what I had said, and which, while they revealed to him his birth, told him also of the love you bore him. He complained coolly, but in strong terms, that I had thwarted your schemes. He never uttered what my heart longed for—the generous approval of a son of a sorely tempted mother who had refrained from crime."

The poor lady again paused, and the nurse refreshed her by putting some wine and water to her lips. Edgar Wade had in the meantime—for we must pause here to return to him—seen Mr Horton, whom he found quite willing to believe in Lord Wimpole's innocence. But Edgar was anxious to get away, and he assented to all Mr Horton surmised, merely gathering from him the result of his inquiries. He had promised to call there, and he performed his promise methodically; but even while the magistrate was talking, and he was listening, his heart was in the sick room with Mrs Wade. With a few complimentary words he arose and left, and walked hurriedly round to Queen Anne Street. He let himself in by his key, and walked up-stairs softly. He had a quiet, careful step, which he seemed to have cultivated. When he reached the landing outside the door of the invalid, he waited for a time and listened. His ears were preternaturally acute. He noted

a pause, as if the conversation had been interrupted—a soft rustling, and the undertones of the doctor, and—heavens!—the voice of Mrs Wade. Quietly turning the handle of the door, he entered softly—so softly, that no one of those so intently listening to the sad shrift of the speaker heard him. But the invalid felt his presence, although her eyes were unopened. Her whole frame shuddered, and seemed dilated with an angry agony. She rose forward, and concluded what she was saying—which had been some guarded statements of a proposition made by her son—and said—

"He is here. I feel his presence. He is my bane, my punishment. He is a *murderer!*"

CHAPTER XLV.

"Fata viam inveniunt."—Virg. Æneid, iii. 395.

THE grand and spacious assembly of the Fraternity of Cogers seemed to swim away into space before the eyes of one of its most eloquent members, as he made that astonished ejaculation lately recorded. As he stared, so said Mr Slammers, like a "stuck pig," that very good-natured Bohemian, who was of an iron constitution, and proof against all accidents arising from convivial meetings, at once saw what to do. Mr Slammers was as ready with his help as he was with his pen—and, poor fellow, with his money; that is, he was too ready with the two last. The journalist suffered from a fatal facility of writing and of giving. No one more ready with a paragraph or with a shilling. The consequence was, that neither—from "B. Slammers, Esq."—seemed to be appreciated. In any journal, or in any list of charitable donations, his clear, simple, and incisive paragraphs, and his small and modest subscriptions, were to be found. The first were said to be worth nothing; the second were given, said his charitable friends, for the sake of advertising the initials of B. S. Neither the talent nor the good heart of the man was appreciated; but he never wanted employment, and almost as seldom a shilling. He was fed, as he observed, as the little birds were, by crumbs,

He might have added that he was the most industrious of birds himself — always looking after the early worm, and never refusing a crumb, however humble. Hence, as the world never can and never will appreciate ready, modest talent or genius, this jolly old Bohemian, who could have beaten the brains out of the ordinary *Quarterly* reviewer, as he then stood —we do not speak of Sydney Smith, Jeffrey, Macaulay, or Southey, but of the ordinary reviewers in the old volumes— sank down to be a mere reporter on a daily paper—or rather for the daily papers.

"Come along, my young friend," said Barnett, as Mr Scorem let his head fall on his shoulder. "The chair has its eye on you. Turn round, face it, and look round. Here is a reviver."

So saying, Barnett—with an agility arising from practice— flicked half a pinch of high-dried Scotch snuff into the nostrils of the clerk, and even managed to send a grain or two into his eyes. Scorem was right in a moment. He sneezed violently; and, as a *tour de force*, rose and made a humorous adieu to his adversaries and supporters, and beat a retreat with all the honours of war. But when Barnett and Mr Checketts got him into the open air, the "poor old man, the aged, and the experienced one," as he called himself—the one who knew the world and its little ways—collapsed, and could hardly find his way home. Barnett stuck by him. Checketts, with many apologies, was obliged to withdraw. This was painful to Scorem, because the "fresh air"—so Slammers accounted for it—had only triumphed over his tongue, his legs, his eyes, which had an indistinct vision, and his body generally. As for his brain, that was as clear as ever.

"My dear young fren'," he ejaculated, looking solemnly at Checketts, "let me be a warn'n', a sp'c'l warn'n'."

"Bless me," laughed Checketts, "I 'm fly, sir—quite fly. A little overcome, like old Gurgles."

And then, to cheer his friend, he struck up with his misquotations :—

> "For the best of all ways
> For to lengthen our days,
> Is to go to bed early at night, my dear.
> For oh, the moon shines bright, my dear!"

"I' dus'n't! 'ts gaz, the new lights. Your fren' Gug'l's crib'd Tom Moore. But's improved him—I say, 'prov'd him."

Then he seemed to lose all that he wished to say, and suddenly adjured Checketts not to waste his youth, nor to bring himself to an early and a repentant grave, as the aged individual before him was about to do.

"Do you know where he lives?" asked Slammers, who had, with a workmanlike way, got him into Bride Court, and near a pump. "Just work away at that."

Checketts soon produced a rush of cold water; and Slammers, taking out a gaily printed pocket handkerchief, soaked it, and wrapped it round the clerk's head.

"My address!" said that individual, quite soberly and with an effort. "Mr Checketts, good night—it is late for you."

He produced a square piece of blue paper, on which was written his name and residence, beautifully engrossed; and Checketts, hearing Slammers promise that he would see his friend all right, sped homewards.

"I am glad he is gone," said the clerk, quite plainly. "I shall be well soon."

"Of course you will, old fellow. You mixed your liquors, I suppose; and hot rooms and excitement did the rest."

"It's not only *that*," answered Scorem. "Come along with me, Mr Slammers. I want you. Give me your arm. My eyes are not quite right yet. Curious, is it not? I never was more sober in my life! Come along."

So saying, they struck into Shoe Lane, passed through New Street Square and Fetter Lane, and by the time they reached the home of Mr Scorem, at the top of Gray's Inn Lane, and nearly opposite Theobald's Road, Scorem was as sober as the proverbial judge. The good-humoured reporter wished to go home; but the clerk was profuse in his thanks, and especially desired to ask his advice.

"I have a bit of cold mutton and a pickle up-stairs, if you will please to walk in. Do be so kind, if you will do me so much honour."

"I 'm honoured myself," returned the reporter. "It 's not every one who would give me cold mutton and a pickle."

"I should have thought, now," returned Scorem, as he showed Mr Slammers into his room, "that everybody was delighted to know an author. I am."

"Ah! young one," returned Slammers, with a sigh—"you *are* young! I used to think so once; and now I 'd rather that people did not know that I write at all; and so would most men."

"Why do they put their names to their books?" asked Scorem, striking a flint and steel, and making a blue light and a powerful smell with a bundle of matches spread out like five fingers of a wooden hand.

"Good! Because publishers would not buy them without. I once wrote a book myself, and foolishly told my mind and what I thought. Everybody immediately abused me, up hill and down dale. I bound up the criticisms, had them labelled 'The Reward of Honesty,' and retired to the safety of anonymous journalism. That is the way, my boy, for me. But one proof was not enough. I wrote another book, anonymously: it was highly praised. I was foolish enough to put my name to the second edition: it was as loudly cried down. After that, I wrote no more. I had solved a problem, and I had found that—

'The post of honour is a private station'—

wherein you can cut, hack, slash, and stab the reputations of your friends and foes with a touching impartiality."

"Is all this true—can it be true?" gasped Scorem.

"True as gospel, my boy," said the reporter, picking out a pickle from a glass bottle. "They have in some papers in France the articles signed with their names; but we could not stand it here. Men are either—mentally, mind you (we are brave enough else)—too cowardly or too *good-natured* to endure the truth, or to speak it openly."

Mr Scorem, solemnly cutting his shoulder of cold mutton, listened and seemed perplexed. He helped Mr Slammers twice, and forgot himself. Then he took pickles and salt, and began his meal upon those comestibles; but, finding they did not agree with him, left off, put down his fork, and stared at the reporter.

"What 's the matter, sir?" asked that worthy. "Are you going to be bad again?"

"Yes," returned the clerk, "very bad indeed!"

"What *is* the matter? Are you ill?"

"Not at all—never better in my life. You tell me you think it dangerous to tell the truth."

"Yes—sometimes, if not always."

"People don't like it?"

"Don't like it!" answered Mr Slammers, picking up his knife and fork again—"don't like it! that 's a mild term—they detest it. It is not pretty, it is not polite, it gets you into hot water, it irritates your enemies, and it estranges your friends. That is a short summary of what it does in this world."

"Then I shall tell it, Mr Slammers," said the clerk, with a furious cut at the mutton. "Won't you take any more? No?—then have an apple—I have some prime ones here."

"They clear the mouth after smoking," answered Slammers; "so I will take one, and keep it till after I have had a pipe. You do not eat."

"No, I have no appetite at all. I will try to smoke. It is not late—only eleven."

"Oh, I can stay up till all is blue," returned the reporter. "Don't get any spirits—I prefer to smoke with beer."

It was a rather cold night, so Mr Scorem had providently set fire to the wood and coal in his wide, old-fashioned stove, that was half-way up the chimney, and which seemed to crook its iron elbows over the ash-pit, as the fire winked, glowed, sparkled, and roared up the wide old chimney. Scorem sat on one side, with a dry pipe in his mouth; Mr Slammers, with a black cutty, puffing away opposite to him, and wondering what was coming. What a curious fellow this clever, quick, half-educated, honest little clerk was. What did he want with *him?*

"People don't ask me up, and give me cold mutton and pickles for nothing," said the cynical reporter to himself. "That is a truth, now, it would not do for me to tell all my friends; but it is a sorrowful fact that when they want anything of me, they find me out; when I want anything of them, I never can find them: they don't come at such times. Hallo! what is he after now?" Scorem, thinking away for

his bare life, had at that moment taken his pipe and dashed it between the two iron elbows of the grate, and then stood up, his eye flashing and his nostril working.

"Well?" asked Slammers, with an inquiring look.

"Well, sir," answered Scorem, "I tell you that I mean to tell the truth, though it may cost me my place; and it will be sure to hurt one whom I admire more than any one on earth. But it is my duty to do so, and I will do it."

There was such an amount of honest earnestness about the young fellow as he said this, and it was uttered so simply and earnestly, that the reporter—a good fellow, if cynical—caught his hand and shook it, and said—

"That 's right, stick to it."

"Then it is right to tell the truth?" said Scorem.

"For a man, yes," returned Barnett; "on'y, you see, you must take what turns up. If you 're strong enough, well and good; you will be a better man, if you don't make friends. But 'ware hawk if you are not, that 's all. Now, what are you after?"

"Sit down and tell me all about that murder. I want to hear all."

"Murder! Does what you are troubled about concern that?"

"I think so. Since I have known about it, I have been haunted as if by a dream."

"A regular Maria Martin case," returned the reporter, staring with all his might. "Was it a dream?"

"No," answered the clerk, "nothing of the sort; only something has struck me. Do you know all the circumstances?"

"I ought to," returned the reporter. "I was with Inspector Stevenson this afternoon, pumping him pretty well. You know, for our kind of literature, we are obliged to keep good friends with the officers of the different courts."

"Does he know all about it!"

"I should think so. He has got the case in hand; and he has set on the cleverest man about these matters—Old Daylight, as they call him."

"Who is he?"

"Mr Tom Forster."

"A stout old gentleman, with a nobby hat and Hessian boots?"

"The very identical. I think I see him now. He can see about as far through a millstone as any man."

"And he is after the criminal?"

"Yes; and will be sure to nab him, if he be the King on the throne. He's sure to get the man, or the one next door to him, I can tell you."

"He called at my governor's the other afternoon. My governor is Mr Edgar Wade, the barrister."

"Ah! very likely. He was named as likely to defend a party implicated," returned the reporter. "I wonder at that, being so young; but he bears a wonderfully good name."

"He is clever," returned Scorem, with a sigh.

"That is as much as to say he is not much else," thought the reporter; but he spoke not.

Scorem was silent, too, for some time. Then he got up, and walked about his room nervously. At last he said—

"Pray go on, Mr Slammers. Tell me all you told me about that murder when I felt so sick and unwell, and as much more as you can."

"All right!" answered the gentleman appealed to, doing as he was asked.

During the whole time of the narration, Mr Scorem sat still, listening very patiently, save now and then when he put a leading question to his companion; and no Old Bailey barrister could have been more shrewd, as Barnett Slammers remarked. How had the poor woman been struck? Did it appear, or was it known whether the assailant was young or old? If young, upon what inference? Was there any weapon found? And such like questions were asked, until Scorem knew as much as his informant, and expressed himself satisfied. Then he thanked his guest heartily, and said that he had a duty to perform.

"Why, you don't mean to say you have anything to do with it?" asked Mr Slammers, wonderingly.

"Thank God! not I," said Scorem, piously. "But circum, stances have let me into something of which I must speak. Can I see Inspector Stevenson?"

"No doubt you can, to-morrow."

"Will you take me to him?"

"If you want to, with pleasure. But now, my good sir—now I have told you everything, perhaps you will tell me what you wanted in consulting me?"

It was now Scorem's turn to change countenance and hesitate. He walked restlessly across the room; then he went to the door and fastened it; then he drew near Mr Slammers, and spoke in a low tone—

"It was the day after that murder that I discovered something. On that night, the governor I don't think slept at his house in Queen Anne Street!"

The reporter started.

"You see, I am going to be out with it all. I mean to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—so help me, Heaven! I am passing the Rubicon, as they say in speeches down at the Cogers'. You must not mind if I am a little distressed. I fancy he did not go home, because the grate in his room, which I had raked out, was yet warm, and full of coal and cinders burnt to a hollow. The laundress was ill—and she is a good old girl, and often does me a good turn—so I came early to dust the chambers and to light the fire. The wood that I had left had been burnt, and in the ashes were some fragments of a woollen fabric and four buttons. There they are—trousers strap buttons, and stamped 'Howle, Conduit Street.'"

"Good God!" cried the reporter.

"The governor gets his trousers made there. Regular swell place, I can tell you."

"But is that all? He might have burnt the legs of a pair of old kickseys for a lark," urged the reporter.

"That is not all," said Scorem. "Going over the old Turkey carpet, I kicked against something under it; and, when I had lighted the fire, I said, 'That's a precious nail that has worked up out of these creaking old boards, which bend under your tread—I'll knock it down.' It wasn't a nail, but a flat steel button; and, sure enough, it had been tight down, but my running across had made it spring up. It had been pushed in, up to its head, between the boards. Here it is."

And Mr Scorem pulled out about eleven inches of the end of a bright steel Solingen foil-blade!

CHAPTER XLVI.

MR TOM FORSTER LEARNS SOMETHING WHICH DOES NOT WHOLLY PLEASE HIM.

UPON the mind of Mr Tom Forster the words of Père Martin had a somewhat astonishing effect. There was so great an air of truth and simplicity about the man, that, in spite of his coolness and his cunning, the old Bow Street runner was assured that what he said was true. At the same time, the reflection occurred, again and again, that all was not right with Mr Edgar Wade. That learned young barrister had been out at all hours; had paid little or no attention to the poor sick lady at home; and was, indeed, himself far from well. Excitement and the disappointment in love began to tell upon him. Pale, languid, and with a hacking cough, the barrister moved restlessly about from his chambers to Queen Anne Street, almost without a purpose, and doing little in his business or at home.

"What," asked Old Daylight of himself, "is the secret influence this woman has over him? The coolest and wisest men lose their heads when in love. I will go and see her. I may find out some way to help him yet. It is a pity he should suffer so much, just now especially."

With Old Daylight a resolve was half the battle. What he determined to do was soon done. He soon ascertained from his friend, Mr Rolt, the whereabouts of Natalie; and, on the very afternoon upon which he had determined to see her, stood outside the little villa, where the apple trees were showing yellow leaves, and autumn was tinting with its sober hues the elms of the neighbouring park and the "grove" which rejoiced in the name of "Lisson." The Virginian creeper which ran up the front of the house was turning to a dusky yellow brown, not yet having achieved the brilliant red hue in which it gloriously dies; and the sad, dull autumn evening harmonised with the quiet and stillness of the suburban dwelling.

"A snug little box," said Forster to himself. "Just the kind of nest to find such a bird in. I suppose there's some theatrical swell about, for I noticed his trap outside."

The trap outside was a well-appointed hooded cab, with a footboard outside at the back, upon which a smart groom perched, swinging by two leather straps pendent from the hood. When the master was out, the groom jumped inside, as had the gentleman who looked after the trap in question, and who was quietly walking the horse up and down, in sight of the villa gate, voting the occupation an "infernal slow" one.

"These pretty birds," said the old man, "might well be called decoy ducks, because they do draw empty young men, with lots of money, after them. I wonder what the drama would be without them? And dramatic authors, too. I heard one of them talking to Rolt. 'Have you seen my piece?' says he. 'How the people crowd to see it!' When Rolt had just been telling me that the great attraction was a new actress, the next was the scenery, the third the orchestra, and the fourth the fittings of the house. It's a mixed life we lead, to be sure!" continued the old gentleman, after a pause. "It's all right, I dare say; but there's nothing pure—there's no man out without lots of mixed motives. They talk about the poetic drama now. Poetic drama!—as if anybody but an old fool like me goes and sees things for the poetry in them."

He had rung the bell; and the neat English servant ushered him into the small dining-room, and took his card, before he had hardly made up his mind what to say. The small villas such as we have described—built at a bad time, when slight brickwork and plenty of stucco served for substantiality—were admirable places to hear in; and Mr Forster had not been long in the quiet little house before he heard an excellent, merry little French song, given with great spirit; and then two gruff voices uttering applauding sounds.

"Why, I am right about that cab," said Old Daylight. "It is a new manager. The little woman has made a hit with her benefit."

"Bravo! Natalie," said the loud, high-toned, coarse voice. "You do the thing to-rights. I always said you could. She's a dangerous little woman, ar'n't she, Peter?"

"She is very clever and beguiling, no doubt; and understands her profession," returned a gentleman in a more sober voice.

"Umph! two of them," returned Daylight. "They ar'n't professionals. That's not the way they would talk."

Then Old Daylight heard the door open, and the subdued voice of the servant as she presented the card.

"Forster!—don't know such man," said Natalie. "Whose like is he?"

"A stout gentleman," or some such words, was the answer; for Natalie said—

"Stout! what means stout?"

"Fat—*gras, brave homme, comme moi,*" said the first voice. "Some one come to make you an offer of marriage, Natalie."

"Very good; tell him wait." And she added, firmly, "He must be a rich man and a nobleman. I do not ally myself with common people—I, who am *artiste.*"

There was a roar of laughter at this from one of the gentlemen—no others than Lord Montcastel and the Hon. and Rev. Peter Boor; but the gentleman who did not laugh was just the one whose laughter would have hurt Natalie. She saw her advantage; and looking at the nobleman, with a sigh and a pretty look, she passed her soft hand over his forehead in a caressing way, and called him "a dear, sweet, good papa."

"It is not any sweetheart," she told his lordship, in effect, "but some one upon business;" and after seeing him she would dismiss him, and come back again. And so away she sailed, flinging a Parthian glance after her, and rendering his enamoured lordship more in love than ever.

"Peter, my boy," said that nobleman, after a pause, when the door had closed behind Natalie, "I think I shall settle."

"You will, indeed," said the clergyman, who had a wife, one sweet infant named Dermot, and a large family in perspective. "And if you do, what is to become of us?" he thought; but he said nothing about that—"You will, indeed, if you marry an actress; and you a nobleman in the peerage of Great Britain!"

"What does that matter? Did not our grandfather marry the servant at a Swiss hotel? and are we any the worse for it?"

"I don't know that we are any the better; and I know that we are a precious deal poorer. Why can't you do as others do? There are many fortunes would be glad of your title; and would put up with you, in your old age, for the sake of it."

"Umph!" grunted his lordship, showing his teeth unpleasantly.

That little reference to his age nettled him. He was of that mature time of life in which a man finds that there are very few enjoyments left him; that he cannot eat as he did when young, nor drink, nor racket, nor stay up late; and that play damages his fortune, as well as ruins his health; and that he had better husband what resources he has, and go in for a quiet life. Selfish as Lord Montcastel always was, and always would be, he was shrewd enough to know that money did not purchase everything; and that a wife of a rich family, with her money carefully settled upon herself and her children, would not add greatly to his own happiness. And so, saturnine and dull in temper himself, and extremely taken with the lightsome flow of spirits that Natalie always assumed when she saw him, he determined long before this, and had taken the necessary steps, to make a matrimonial alliance such as that which his clerical brother, who was his heir-presumptive, had always dreaded. And it must be said, in justice to that reverend gentleman, and in exculpation of the too faithful historian who has shown him, in those rude days, behind the scenes, and at the house of an actress, that he went with his brother as a mentor, and to save his house from any trouble or disgrace. Natalie approached Mr Tom Forster in so winning a way, that that gentleman could not but be taken with her. The little woman was an artist in her dress, and never threw a smile or a courtesy away. Clear and clever as the old man was, he hesitated before he spoke to her; and Mdlle. Fifine had to inquire the purpose of his visit twice before she received an answer. At length he said, in a low tone—for he did not wish the gentlemen in the other room to overhear him—

"I am a friend of Mr Edgar Wade—a very old friend, mademoiselle; and I claim the privilege of visiting you on his behalf. You know him, I am sure, for he visits you."

"Oh yes," said Natalie, her cheerful smile vanishing at once. "A very nice gentleman, who loves art, and who has made me some presents. Did he send you to me? Has he sent a letter? If so, let me have it, and rejoin my guests."

"I cannot say that he has sent a letter, or any message," returned Old Forster, bluntly. "I am come to say that he is very ill at ease about you."

"Are you his doctor? Poor man, he must get well. I can do nothing with him."

"He, I believe, loves you very dearly, and would put his future in your hands. He is at present but a poor barrister."

"What is that?"

"What you call an *avocât*," returned Forster. "You know that, I suppose. He may rise, and become a great man."

"Ah," thought the old fellow, "if she only knew what a great man he really is, how the little Delilah would snap him up!"

"I hope he will; but he is poor now, he tells me."

She said this simply.

"Yes," returned Forster. "Not so rich as he will be."

"Ah! that 'will be.' My good friend, I am impatient at waiting for it. It never comes—never! I have known many young girls grow old women waiting for 'will be.' I will take what I can get."

"Have you told Mr Wade so?"

"Yes. If he were here now, I should tell him so more plainly. I am going, I hope, to marry a rich man—an English milord. You may tell your friend so, if you come to bother me with an offer. Your friend is good-looking and tall, a fine man; but so *triste*, so dull—like an English day in autumn. I do not like these young men. They are so selfish, too. I have told him to go away."

This was not exactly true, as it was only within the last few hours that Lord Montcastel and Natalie had come to an understanding. Old Forster whistled as she said this. So it had come to that! The infatuated young man had offered to marry her, and she had refused him! Well, it was as well as it was. But, poor young fellow, to be so treated just as a brilliant prospect opened before him!

"Men," thought the old man, "are often blamed for really hating women. But do not some women deserve it?"

"So I will, if you please, say good evening—my friends are awaiting me. Give my respects to M. Edgar Wade, thank him for his kindness, and tell him—but it must be a secret from anybody else, and I am sure I can trust him and you; it will put him at rest, too, poor fellow; for he is of a very jealous nature, and I do so hate jealous people—tell him that the Natalie Fifine, whom he used to admire so as an *artiste*, will be glad to receive him as Madame la Marquise de Montcastel!"

The little woman rose upon her feet as she said this, and swept back with a grand tragedy air. The clear, keen whisper cut the air, and pierced the ear of the old man like the hiss of a snake, and made him feel uncomfortable. He rose at once.

"I will go, mademoiselle," he said, politely; "but you will excuse me carrying that message."

"Eh! well, never mind. Say nothing to any one. He will see it in the papers. Good evening, mons'r."

"Here's a complication!" thought Old Forster. "Tell him! Not if I know it. If I did so, I should kill him, worried and ill as he is. And she to marry that old man! Well, well—what will not woman do for money?"

The groom, seeing a gentleman emerge while he was at a distance, came up at a short trot, but was disappointed again, and drove away.

"That's his lordship's cab, is it?" said Old Forster. "How I should like to drive home in it. But, no; I'll just run round to Homer Street, and see whether there are any messages. Precious glad the little girl has hooked any one else but my boy. Is that all the mischief? If so, there will be a sudden burst, and he will live it down. But no, no—there's something else."

And, with a sense of impending evil against the man he loved so well, the old fellow trotted away, in his creaking Hessians, towards Homer Street. And Natalie Fifine, feeling a great elation at having got rid of an unpleasant suitor, burst into the room where her guests were yawning, and commenced singing Béranger's "King of Yvetot," in the most joyous tones:—

"Il etait un roi d' Yvetot,
Peu connu dans l'histoire;
Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,
Dormant fort bien sans gloire."

And cracking his fingers, and grinning with delight, Lord Montcastel, with a deep voice, caught up the spirit of the syren, and joined in the chorus—

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! Ah! ah! ah! ah!
Quel bon petit roi c'etait là!
La! la!"

"Well, I'm blowed," said the groom, with his teeth chattering, as he leant over the wooden apron which shut him in the cabriolet, "the old man's merry to-night. I shouldn't wonder if he came away 'tosticated—shouldn't care if he did, on'y them fellows are so beastly selfish. When they're inside, they never thinks of us poor fellows outside. It's the way of the world. And the poor animile—he wants a mouthful o' oats, too."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Miserable creature!
If thou perish in this, 'tis damnable;
Dost thou imagine thou canst slide on blood,
And not be tainted by the shameful fall?"
—*The White Devil* (1612), actus iv.

ALL this time, when Lord Wimpole was undergoing great trials, and Mrs Wade lay between life and death, the world went on as gaily as usual. Mr Wrench, Mr Kemble, and Miss Fanny Kemble, were acting to his Majesty's lieges night after night; Miss Sherriff and Miss Inverarity, the two rival Queens of Song, sang against each other, and were described as being engaged in an encounter, the humour of the thing consisting in criticising the piece in pugilistic language. "Both, we need scarcely say," added the *Luminary*, "showed first-rate science, good training, and were in admirable condition. The fight lasted some time, during which each underwent many *rounds*—of applause. The result of this contest between the

rival nightingales was, that each left a higher opinion of her talents with the audience than before, and neither came off *second best.*"

"Neat—very neat that;" said Mr Rolt, as he read it. "Funny dog, that critic. That's what people like to read. What's this about Taylor?"

"'Miss Taylor's legs enacted that chartered libertine, the Page. O Miss T.! Miss T.!—do lengthen your skirts at least two inches.'

"Gad! a clever fellow. That will pull 'em in, sir—that will pull 'em in. I'll give the fellow a lift by an extract." And the ingenious editor ran his pencil down the page, and scored the passage for his "sub" to cut out. "Humph! here is a small hit at Sir Charles Wetherall—eccentric, very; here an attack on Croker, of the Admiralty. Something about his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland—a dark horse that; and Lyndhurst and Ellenborough, two new caricatures—one by young Seymour, and the other by Cruikshank. Really, I don't know how we should get on without these public people. They are food for the press, sir—the press, the palladium of British lib"——

But the reader has heard that phrase before. Mr Rolt was in excellent spirits. The *Argus* was keeping its hundred eyes wide-awake, and spreading its tail—or *tales*—like the bird into which that hero of mythology was changed.

"And what's the fashionable news? Let's see. Ha, ha! An attack upon 'The State Chimney-sweeps, in *sootable* attire.'" Here Mr Rolt looked at some copy that had been sent in. "'The King acknowledges the supremacy of the *petticoats*, and it is certain that his successor will be like him, only governed by an *Addle-head.*' Coarse, very; won't do to anticipate. Here, let us see: 'Lady Jersey, Marchioness of *Sly-go.*' Very poor joke. 'Countess Glengall'—'pon my soul!" cried the editor, "the world is very censorious. Who would be a person in high station? How each rumour is caught hold of, and every crack in a reputation is made wider by these fellows. Crack, do I say? If a china vase is whole, and will ring like a bell, these fellows paint a crack where they do not find one."

Upon coming to this reflection, the editor—who had, at the

bottom of his heart, some feelings of the gentleman still left—sighed, lighted a cigar, and walked to the window.

"Hallo! who is that on the opposite side of the way? Old Tom Forster! I wonder where he is off to. No, 'tis some one else, but very like him."

Mr Forster was indeed far away from Wellington Street, and busy closeted with Mr Horton; and the occasion was this. His inductive philosophy was for once, and once only, failing him; and new claimants for the notoriety of crime were springing up.

Upon the morning after the day upon which Old Daylight had visited Natalie, Mr Samuel Brownjohn, passing along the corrider which led to the police cells, was interrupted and somewhat startled by a timid voice, which called out—

"Hi! hi! sir—hi! You, Mr Pol-ease-man."

Upon which he turned round, and said—

"Why, who are you?"

It was Master Patsy Quelch, looking warm and comfortable, seated in a barely furnished room, by the fire, and peering about, with restless eyes, for some fellowship in that lonely place. Mr Brownjohn went up to the boy, and put his hand on his head, quietly.

"Why, man alive," said he, "I had nearly forgot you. I'm thinking of another boy—the tall one from Kensal-Green. There 's something wrong about him."

"Is he a bad boy?" asked Patsy, taking an interest, as boys do, in one of their own class. "There is many bad boys about, sir. Some on 'em swears dreadful."

"Bad enough, bad enough," said the police sergeant; "and bad boys grow up bad men. Don't you go and do it."

"I won't, sir," returned Patsy, quickly. "I am sorry the t'other one is."

"I don't say he is," said Brownjohn, good-humouredly. "I say nothing about the boy. Only, you see, somehow I was in a hurry, and somehow I was pitched agin' Old Daylight, and made a wrong jump."

"Hope you didn't go to hurt yourself, sir," returned Patsy, innocently.

"Well, we shall see soon," replied the sergeant. "He 'll

be here in a moment. I can't see that the old man is guilty."

"He isn't, sir," cried Patsy, quickly, at a venture. "He is a good old man, sir—looks like one, don't he, sir?"

"Ah! my boy, when you get as old as I am, and have cut your eye-teeth, you will find that fine looks don't make fine hearts, I can tell you. So you don't," he added, looking down upon the urchin he had befriended, and whom, therefore, he felt well disposed to—"you don't intend to turn out bad."

"Oh no, sir."

"Well, Patsy—isn't that your name?—and what do you intend to do?"

"Turn out good, sir."

"Ay! but how, my boy? London is a cruel, big, stony-hearted place for a boy like you."

"Gentleman promised to help me—Mr Folaire, sir. Oh, such a nice man! Gave me a lift in his gig, with such a spanking 'orse in it. Gave me his card, sir."

Here Patsy held up a card—"Messrs Cooke and Company, St Paul's Churchyard"—in the corner of which was printed, "*Represented by Mr Charles Folaire.*"

"Promised to help me," continued Patsy, with beautiful faith; "and he 'll do it—sure to. Know by his face. He isn't one as tells lies."

"Hope he will," returned the officer. "Maybe he will. Some of those city fellows are uncommon good to sharp boys; and you 're a sharp 'un. Well, here 's a shilling, Patsy. You can go. If you don't get anything, come back to me, and I 'll try to help you."

"But there 's t 'other one, sir," returned Patsy, making no signs to go—"t 'other one, as broke my shin bone a'most—him you called *Seizer*."

"By George!" returned Brownjohn, "that old fellow's evidence has put everything else out of my head. Where is César, eh?"

"Locked up, sir," replied Patsy.

Brownjohn jumped to his feet.

"Locked up! Why, they had no right to do that."

"Well, when you was gone, sir, he first tried to square the

hofficer; and then, as he wouldn't let him go, he made a rush for it. He was collared; and they put him for safety in a little room by hisself."

In a cell, in fact—for such was meant by Patsy's pleasant "little room"—the ingenuous César was found by Samuel Brownjohn, who, using the privilege of the peep-hole, found the Maltese lying prone, like a Grecian statue, graceful in repose as he was in action, and in an attitude of despair. Solitude, accompanied by small warmth, did not suit the Maltese.

Brownjohn, taking his key, unlocked the door, and called to Negretti.

"Ah! my Brownjohn," said the Maltese, "I am glad you have come to take me from this beastly place."

"Come along and warm yourself," said the sergeant, leading him into the room where Patsy was sitting.

He noticed that, when Negretti saw the boy, a diabolical expression passed rapidly over his face. Patsy said nothing, but looked sharply to his protector, to whose side he edged himself.

"What are you afraid of, boy?" asked the sergeant. "Negretti ain't a-goin' to kick you again, while I am here."

"'Tisn't that," whispered Patsy, scorning to appear afraid of a kick. Then he nudged Brownjohn, and said, in a yet lower whisper, "Overhaul his bundle, sir—do, please."

"'Gad," returned the sergeant, "I 'd forgot that. Let me see—where did I put it? Oh! I know; in the locker."

Luckily, the locker was in the very room they were then sitting in; and while César was sitting rocking himself moodily to and fro, Brownjohn produced the key, unlocked the door, and secured the bundle. Then, putting it on the table, he proceeded slowly to untie the knots. The Maltese exhibited a strange restlessness; looked to the door between which and himself was the figure of the stalwart policeman; then, tightening his muscles for a spring, he jumped suddenly to the table, snatched the bundle from the policeman's hands, and threw it on the fire, stamping it down with his foot. The action was one of a moment. In a moment, also, Brownjohn's great hand was twisted in his collar, and Negretti was dexterously twirled into the middle of the room; while Patsy, who had come to the rescue, picked the singed bundle from the fire."

"Cleverly done, boy," said the policeman. "Now, look here, Negretti," he said, "this won't do. Don't be foolish. You know I can hold you till all is blue—at least, your face would be if I throttled you. But I hate hard measures. There must be something in that bundle, or you wouldn't be so anxious to burn it."

"Nothing that concerns you," returned the Maltese, savagely. "What right have you with my property? You engage me to help you to find a man, and I do so. You bring me up to London against my will, because that Irish imp, that pig there, told you. You lock me up when I want to go away; and now you try and search my bundle. What have you to do with it?"

Mr César Negretti, being released from Brownjohn's hands, here drew himself up in an injured way.

"Why, you see," returned the officer, with imperturbable good-humour, "you led me a pretty dance till you got to the seaside, when you wanted to get off. But I had my suspicions, and this boy turned up just in time. He had his suspicions as well. He was your fellow-servant at the Café, and no doubt he knows of your prigging a thing or two."

Here the boy's eyes twinkled with an extraordinary intelligence.

"Yes, sir," he said, "there 's a spoon or two of the padrone's there. I see 'im take 'em."

"And he must answer for it," ejaculated the police officer. "People are not to be robbed because they are poor foreigners."

"They are my own, cursed pig!" replied the Italian, to Patsy. "Devil's imp—I was right to hate you as I did."

"That may be," continued Brownjohn, as Patsy was silent. "Besides, Negretti, you are not with clean hands. You remember your pilferings from Lord Wimpole? and I 'm doubtful whether something won't turn up here."

"Where 's your warrant?" asked the Maltese. "We are in a free country here."

"Very free," said Brownjohn; "but I take this on myself. And here 's the man that 'll say whether or not I am wrong. I 'll report to my superior officer."

A step was heard pacing along the corridor, in the measured tread which betokens a police officer; and as Brownjohn, stand-

ing firmly at the door, partially opened it and gave a low whistle, the owner of the strongly-made boots, and the stalwart legs that put them down so firmly, entered. It was no one less than Inspector Stevenson.

"Hallo! Brownjohn, what 's up?" he said.

"Nothing much, sir," answered the officer. "I told Negretti here I should pinch him, and I think I shall. Only a petty theft."

"It 's all a mistake, sir," pleaded the Maltese, in his most winning tones, to the Inspector. "Mr Brownjohn has a spite against me"—

"I scorn the action," said the officer.

—"And he is anxious to hunt up something against me, because I got out of his hands once."

"Don't make another mistake," said the Inspector, somewhat sternly, to the sergeant. "I 'm very much afraid that the old man you 've picked up has had nothing to do with the matter. There 's something about him that looks very much like innocence."

"That may be," returned Brownjohn, somewhat despondingly. "Nobody's always right, 'cept your friend, Mr Tom Forster. He always hits the right nail on the head."

"Well, that may be," said Stevenson, good-naturedly. "He has a happy knack, to be sure. This has got nothing to do with it, has it?"

"Oh no—not that I know of. Boy says that there were some spoons in the bundle as belonged to the keeper of the coffeehouse where I picked up this Italian here."

"Well, there 's no harm in looking," returned the Inspector. Then, seeing the restless manner and glaring eyes of Negretti, he added, "Now, you just keep quiet, and you 'll come to no harm. A man comes to harm always by his own acts. If you 're right, then you may go; if you 're wrong, then you must answer for it. That 's our way here."

"'Sh!" hissed the Maltese, as if he were weary of the altercation. "Do as you like—I am weary of the business. Poor, friendless, and innocent!" and he threw himself down on the wooden stool before the fire, a statuesque and graceful picture of despair. So the bundle was opened. Patsy, with bright

eyes, leant over the table as the bundle was opened. The Inspector carelessly turned over some of the contents. There were two silver spoons.

"There 's the spoons," cried Patsy, with glee. "I told you so!"

"Phew!" whistled the Inspector, as he looked at the other contents; "this looks serious, by jingo! I wonder what will come of this!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"O Verities! again, what ravishments have you to consolate the soules of the most afflicted!"—*The Mirrour which flatters not.* By the Sieur de la Serre. P. 27.

Mr Jasper Snape, tailor and pigeon fancier, was the only one, perhaps, who mourned over the victim of the tragedy. It was barely a week since the crime, and the murdered person had been almost forgotten. Now and then, some bold foot-travellers would pass over the fields from Kilburn, to gaze at Acacia Villa, which was shut up, and bore in its front garden a black board on which, in white letters, this desirable residence was described as "to be let." The old man one morning pulled a quantity of threads from his round shoulders—bent with working at his board—straightened his hollow chest as well as he could, combed his dusty hair from his forehead, cast his shop-board slippers into the corner, and put on his bluchers and his hat. The hat was turned up at the brim at the back of his head, and greasy with rubbing on his coat collar, looking after his pigeons and the "strays."

"She was a nice woman," remarked Jasper. "She didn't talk too much. She could keep her own house and her counsel."

Mr Snape was not exactly a mysogynist, but he limited his admiration to strong-minded women.

"I wouldn't have minded marryin' her myself," he continued; "but there, she 's in her grave, and they 've forgotten her. By George," he said to himself, after a little while, "if I had married her, they might have murdered me." And a cold

shudder passed through the little man's frame as he thought of this.

"At any rate, there's something mysterious about this case,' he said, as he walked into his garden, and pulled a string which let the grating fall from his pigeon-house, and the young birds fly a little. "Whir-r-r! Whoop!" He threw up a tassel made of thrums and threads, and set the birds wheeling round and round before he fed them. That done, he walked through his house, looked at the work at his shop-board, felt disgusted at it—as most workmen now and then do—and determined, as he said, "to have a skulk." It is a very natural feeling this. For three hundred and ten days out of the three hundred and sixty-five, Jasper Snape was to be found at his board, cross-legged, with his pale face peering out of his window—blue with cold in the winter, and shining with perspiration in the summer. His very flowers—his nettle and scarlet geraniums, his spindly mignonette, and his musk plant—turned away their brightest leaves from the poor worker's gaze, and looked out of the window to cheer the passers-by. Mr Jasper Snape, calling out to a humbler help, who was somewhere about his little house, "to look sharp"—which was a hopeless task on her part, poor creature—adjured her to say that, if any one called, he had gone round to wait on a customer—which was in one sense true. The landlord of the public-house—to which the reader and Mr Brownjohn were introduced in an early chapter—was certainly a customer, and Jasper waited on him for business purposes; but it was for business of his own. He wanted a pipe, a glass of ale, and a gossip: wanted to take the wrinkles from his mind, and the stiffness from his knees; wanted to straighten out his back, and relieve himself of his cares. As he sat down in the sunny parlour of the country public-house, with a fragrant pipe of bird's-eye and a good glass of ale, his vision seemed brighter, and he looked upon the world in a less invidious way. Presently the bustling landlord came in.

"'Mornin', Mr Snape; mornin'!" said he. "How are all things your way, now?"

"Pretty good," returned the tailor. "You ain't doing badly, neither."

"No—thank Heaven!" returned the publican, recounting something that would make a teetotaller blush at the weakness and sin of the world. "No, 'tisn't bad. We had three trade dinners and one weddin' party within the week, and I 'm blest if they didn't drink us nearly dry. I ought to be very thankful, Mr Snape," continued the landlord, who was a pious man —"very thankful indeed, for such favours."

"So you ought," returned the tailor; "and you 're the man to do it, Mr Points."

"I 've a favour to ask of you, Mr Snape, sir," said the landlord. "And it is, sir, that you will take half a pint with me."

Mr Points, like a true gentleman, made it appear that he was accepting a favour when he was conferring one; and Mr Snape felt flattered.

"Mr Points, sir," he said, "I am your very humble servant, sir."

And the two boon companions fell to talking of the story of the crime, which was fresh upon the minds of both.

"They don't do much in London, Mr Points, with all their new-fangled police, with their swallow-tailed coats and pewter buttons."

"I wish you had the contract for the men's coats," said the publican, nudging the tailor; whereat they both laughed.

"And I wish you had the supply of the beer what the whole force drinks," returned the tailor.

Mr Points had just informed his friend that the police had been stirring, "because," said he, "one on 'em gave notice to that tall boy to be up to the office before twelve this morning;" and Mr Snape had ventured his opinion that it was the old story; when a gruff voice was heard at the bar, ejaculating—

"I am a honest 'ard labrin' workin' man, dash my old bones, and all I wants is a pint o' beer."

Points rang the bell for the barman; but the rough voice again bawled out—

"I labours for my bread, and I 'll have my beer. I 'm on land and water. I am a workin' man, I am; d 'ye hear, I 'm a workin' man? Come, draw the beer. You ain't a workin' man, are yer?"

Mr Points rose to interfere; but the man—like a good-humoured Caliban as he was—blew the froth from the pot, smiled over a large expanse of countenance—letting the smile steal gradually, as over a vast landscape—and then drank Mr Points' health. Points was bound to return this politeness, and the monster was pacified. He quaffed a deep draught, and drew a long breath.

"Well, you're an honest man," said he; "and that's honest good stuff; but it's been the death o' too many."

He was a big, hairy fellow, with a brick-red face; a fur cap, with ears to it, tied under the chin; a waistcoat which had broken out into an irregular rash of white pearl buttons; and thick corduroy trousers, tied up round his knees, to enable him to work without draggling them about a pair of stalwart ankle-jacks, that looked as if they could stand any kind of weather, and would last for years. He stood firmly in these boots, swaying backwards and forwards—not by any means tipsy, but rather quarrelsome. Happily, the fit passed off. The beer really had a somewhat sobering effect upon him, and he called for his pipe in a pleasanter mood.

"So, landlord, you're being carrying on a pleasant game in this little village: murderin' of a woman, eh! I heerd of it!"

"So you've heard of it, have you?" said Snape, coming forward in his sharp, authoritative way.

"Heerd of it, yes. I mind it well enough, 'cos on the very day I gave a chap a lift in my wessel, the *Lively Kate*, up to Lunnon."

"The very man," whispered the landlord, "that one of the policemen went after"—his bright eyes twinkling like a blackbird's when he looks up sideways.

"Why, my man, do you know anything of that fellow? If you do, there's money to be made. They're after that man."

"Aer they? He was a nice, innocent old fellow—a Proosian or a Roosian, or some furrineer. There was no harm in him," said the bargee. "I took 'im on board 'cos he was used to the water, and felt safer."

"Ah!" said Snape, disposing himself to listen, and nudging Mr Points, as if to say, "This is important, now."

"Well, I felt lonely. You heerd me say just now that beer

was good, on'y it wor the death o' many. It was the death o' my old woman. She was a good woman, she was—a main too good for Bill Bulger; and I 'm sorry I lick'd her ever, now she 's gone."

Mr Bulger's regret came too late, like the regrets of most of us. What could he do now—now poor Molly was gone? He put up his huge hands, knotted with muscles, to his eyes, and exhibited on the back of them strange tattooing.

"You see," he said, "'twas down in the country, where the canal runs for miles in the fields; and I was away on the path, mindin' the old hoss, and Molly was at the tiller. We were at a bend o' the canal, and I was trudgin' on, head down'ards, a-thinkin'. I thought I heerd a splash, but didn't mind it till the old hoss was jerk'd off his legs a'most, by the barge comin' ashore. I went back to swear a bit at Molly, and saw the tiller swingin' a-one side with no-but nobody there. Then a cold sweat come over me. I pulled up, and run back. There warn't no Molly. I never see her more till she turned up, three days arterwards, at one of the lock gates. Poor Molly!"

"Dropped over," cried the landlord.

"Just so," said the bargee.

"Well," cried Jasper, hurriedly, "we can't bring poor Mrs Bulger back to life again."

"No, we can't," said the bereaved widower; "else I would. Molly liked a drop of somethin' short. She and I had been havin' a row, as most people would as lived so close together as we do aboard a barge. She had been comfortin' herself, and she 's—gone!"

This was her simple epitaph. The poor bargee had a hoarse voice and moist eyes as he pronounced it.

"But we can serve some one else. They 've got that Frenchman, no doubt. You can say when he went away, can't you?"

"To the minit," said Mr Bulger, looking up at the call of duty; "but I sha'n't tell you."

"Never mind me—tell it the magistrate," said Snape. "You don't mind coming with me?"

"Not a bit, if I can help a man, and get a bit o' money,' said the bargee.

Thus it was that, about twelve o'clock, Mr Jasper Snape

and Mr William Bulger presented themselves—Mr Snape for the second time—at the door of the police court. Mr Horton, Mr Tom Forster, and the inspector were at the time somewhat doubtful as to how to proceed. The tall boy had given his evidence, had recognised the Père Martin—who had not, indeed, denied his presence, but had remembered giving him the sixpence, how spent the reader knows; but the tall boy had filled up a blank of great importance, which he had left open in the evidence given by him to Brownjohn at Kensal-Green. The French sailor had departed about five o'clock—for the tall boy had come away from school at half-past four; and there was positively nothing against old Martin. But, then, on Mr Brownjohn's mind there was the not unlikely fact that the tall boy had been tampered with; and Mr Horton himself was for detaining the foreign gentleman in honourable seclusion for some days, until another witness could be procured. That witness was nobody less than the bargee; and at the very nick of time—ushered by Inspector Stevenson, who had been sent for—in walked the witness.

"Ah, my friend!" said old Martin, with a sigh of relief, "the good Heaven is kind. It does not altogether desert the innocent."

"No," thought Tom Forster, "but it lets them get into strange scrapes. A wonderful provision in this world of trial. Let us hear what this man's evidence is."

Mr Bulger, who had taken his hairy cap off a bristly, bullet-shaped head, was looking round the office—up at the ceiling, down at the floor, at the magistrate; then, on meeting his eyes, throwing his own glance in the contrary direction. He held his cap very tightly in both hands, as if he expected that justice or the police would snatch it away. He recognised Martin with a nod, and said, gruffly—

"That 's the chap I gave a lift to."

"Let him be sworn," said the magistrate. "You know the nature of an oath, my man?"

"Rather," said Mr Bulger, with a grin.

"You will speak the truth, the whole truth, and"——

"I 'll take my Solomon's oath I will," said the bargee, with great solemnity, kissing the book.

On the 29th of September, at half-past four, Mr Bulger, according to his evidence, was standing on the towing-path, thinking of his lost wife, and feeling "werry lonesome," when "this genel'm', Mr Martin, came up, got talking of seafaring matters," spoke about his barge, and finally said he would like a ride. They set off exactly at five, after drinking and lighting up their "baccy."

"How do you know the time?" asked Mr Horton.

"Well, you see, gov'nor," returned Mr Bulger, pulling out of his corduroy fob, by a broad, flat steel chain, an ancient silver watch, as round almost as a Dutch cheese—"'tain't none of your *leavers*, as is made for the pop-shop ; but I 'll back un agin Sen Pall's !"

Mr Martin was free ! He shook hands with his captor, thanked the magistrate, and preferred a modest request—only one favour for all his trouble. Justice must be served ; he was the victim, that 's all. Here he sighed, but looked up brightly. Where did the great Seigneur live, Milord Chesterton ? Le Père Martin had something to tell his lordship.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"*Dutch.* Yet staie ; heaven gates are not so highly arched
As princely palaces. They that enter there
Must go upon their knees."
—*The Dutchesse of Malfy*, actus iv. scena ii.

Mrs Wade, as she uttered the words, "*He is a murderer !*" shut her closed eyelids more tightly than before, and shuddered, as if she saw a vision of dreadful import. Edgar Wade, terribly excited, stood and looked at the dying woman, and said not a word. His face was dreadfully pale, his eyes lustrous. His whole frame and face betokened strong emotion. The rest of the company showed little heed of what the poor woman said, and paid more attention to her than to her words. Dr Richards supported her with his strong arm, holding some wine to her lips, and soothing her in his gentle way ; for the little man was as tender-hearted as he was clever. The dying woman spoke again

"I have spoken, and would speak more; and yet, how dangerous is the tongue—how well should we watch it! You heard me call my son a murderer, just now: it was a mother's hasty word. And, alas! my Edgar"—here she turned towards him mysteriously, as if she could see through those transparent closed lids, which were so thin that they showed in more strong contrast the largeness of the orbs beneath them—"alas, my Edgar! you have indeed planted thorns in the heart you should have guarded and shielded. May Heaven forgive you, as I do now! My balm of comfort has turned but to bitterness. The hope with which I nursed you when you were a child failed me when you grew a man. Come to me. Kiss me."

The smile which wreathed the lips of the speaker was one of those peculiarly sweet and saintly smiles so seldom seen, and so hard to describe. It was full of forgiveness, of love, of intercession even—of high feeling, far above the passion of this world—of strength, and yet of weakness. Good women, weakly struggling against cruel and brute strength, often shed such smiles upon their masters; and it is to be noted that these dumb and meek replies have the power of irritating those to whom they are given more than strong words or heavy blows. Edgar Wade stood up at the side of the bed; and to the kneeling nurse, and doctor, and the Earl—who had fallen down as if in prayer—towered above the poor dying woman, as the following words seemed suddenly to leap from his mouth—to be, indeed, wrung from him:—

"I call you all here to witness and to remember the words I reply to the mad woman who lies there. I distinctly disown the relationship she seeks to establish. The Earl here knows how cruelly I have been used—how my youth has been wasted, and my manhood blasted, by crimes and follies antecedent to my birth, and over which I could have no possible control. I shall stand upon my own right. I am full of trouble and anxiety—there is no man more to be pitied than I am. But I again warn you to place no credence upon what this lady has said. I have evidence to show that there has been a conspiracy to defraud me of my rights. I totally deny that I am her son, and I shall take measures to establish that fact at the earliest moment possible."

The same sad smile continued for some time, as the hurried words fell upon Mrs Wade's ear; but it faded quickly out when they came to an end. The nursing Sister had pressed more closely to the invalid, and had placed in her hands a small crucifix. Dr Richards held up his hand to the speaker, as if warning him to be silent. The Earl pressed his grey head more closely to his sheltering hands; and Winifred closed her eyes, as if by that means she could shut out the cruel scene. When Edgar Wade paused, the dying woman said, in a very soft and humble tone—a tone which seemed to convey to all who heard, that all hope in this world was gone—

"Edgar, Edgar!—alas, what have you said?"

"That which I know and believe," cried the barrister, sullenly. "I wish to Heaven that any of those present could be in my place for one moment—could feel the icy desolation in which I have dwelt for years—could know the sad brooding over wrong, the torment which has pursued me, the restlessness which my fate has begotten. Farewell for ever! From this time forth I see you no more—you have been my nurse in childhood, my companion in boyhood, my bane and curse in all!"

In a moment he was gone: the room was empty of his presence. The nursing Sister rose from her knees; the doctor again attended to his patient; the Earl and Winifred seemed to breathe more freely. Poor, dying Mrs Wade pressed the emblem of her faith, which the Sister had left in her hands, more closely to her lips. She breathed now with some difficulty; tears gathered under the transparent eyelids, and fell upon the dim and wasted face. She murmured—

"Pity me, O heaven! Alas! he is lost. O Edgar!—my son, my son!"

The words found an echo in the heart of the Earl of Chesterton, who, moving towards the sufferer, placed his hand gently upon hers. The effect seemed to be electrical. The memory, that wondrous quality which our philosophy cannot fathom nor analyse, recalled the never-forgotten touch of that hand, which seemed to cheer her now as it had cheered her in happier times. The poor, sad face looked for a brief moment brighter and happier; the life, now flagging and becoming

wearied of its long fight with death, came for a minute back, with greater power, and with fuller pulses. The voice, sweet and low as ever, was stronger as it spoke.

"My Philip, are you here? Ah, well I know it! You were my joy and delight in the beginning of my life—indeed, I never lived until I knew you, nor at all to this world, save in that short delirium of happiness your presence gave; and now you are my solace and my comfort—now, when I am about to set out alone upon a long voyage, dark and dreary it may be, but wherein I know that I shall reach a haven of rest. Rest! it is all I want, my Philip. I forgive you—forgive me, too. Look with love upon my weaknesses; for love itself is wisdom, and the time will come when empty, worldly, cruel knowledge will be lost in love."

"I pray God for that good time, Eugenie," said the Earl, with a broken voice. "Poor stricken bird, so much sinned against, and so little sinning! Alas! how have you been punished for these long years, suffering and alone! But you alone have not suffered. As I, too, bore my share of sin—the far greater and more hateful share, for the part I so unworthily played—so, heaven is my witness, I have not been without its punishment. The world knew nothing of it; but it was more bitter because I bore it alone, and unknown to all."

The thin hand which lay under that of the Earl was gently turned upward to his own, and clasped his somewhat firmly, as if to convey, even at the last, some comfort and some love.

"You forgive me, Eugenie? I know you do. Alas! what weight of sorrow and of cruelty you have to forgive. You ask my forgiveness! I have nothing to forgive—nothing but now to return your love, and to bless you and pray for you as you die. You are happy in dying; we are all miserable that live. O Eugenie, Eugenie! my first, my only love, would that I could die in peace, as you do now!"

He was silent. The gold watch in the doctor's pocket was heard ticking, at its busy task of numbering the minutes of this mortal life, in which we make so loud a cry and so busy a to-do. The invalid, who had bestowed the last warm pressure on the hand of him she loved, suddenly withdrew it, and pressed to her lips, with both thin hands, the crucifix of the

Sister. The doctor watched her face more closely. He nodded his head to the Earl, who had arisen, as much as to say—"The change has come. Science is of no use now. Here is One against whom that cannot struggle."

Winifred arose too, and placed her soft, warm hand upon the cold, thin hands that held the crucifix; but, gazing upon the face, the tears, which had been falling fast from the young wife's eyes, stopped, as she saw the change stealing over the features of her more than widowed sister. The nurse had arisen too; and with holy but unmoved countenance, repeated the prayers of her Church for the parting soul. Blessings upon that faith which never deserts the worn and wearied, the sick and the dying, the weak and bruised; which attends us upon the threshold of this world—into which we come naked and crying—and is not absent from us when we go forth, beaten and defeated it may be, but released from our burdens! As the pack which Christian wore upon his shoulders—a sore and heavy weight, grievous to be borne—fell away from him when he reached the Delectable Mountains, so from this poor dying sinner, guilt, sin, and the troubles of the world rolled away. Her features regained a placid, a contented, and even a joyful look—joyful with surprise, as if some vast curtain of dark mist had rolled away, and she could see something beautiful and bright. A slight shudder shook her frame, and this returned three times, each seemingly more strong than the other; and then the same sweet smile with which she had greeted her son returned, but without the patient suffering that she had before expressed. Then again came a deeper and more sudden shudder. The eyes slowly opened, the smile died away, the features were composed and at peace; but the wide, deep, liquid eyes, so fixedly gazing, saw nothing. Eugenie Wade had ceased to belong to this world of trouble!

"She is dead," said the doctor. "I foresaw how it would be. If she had been quite alone, may be, she might have lived for some hours. But was it worth while? Poor thing, she must have suffered!"

He took one of the hands as he spoke this, and he said what he had to say—good fellow as he was, and much used to death-bed scenes—with tears in his eyes, and lifted it gently up; it

fell a dead weight upon the cross which it had clasped. The Sister ceased her prayers, and, crossing the hands upon the breast, placed the crucifix between them. The Earl stooped down and kissed the dead forehead of her whom he had so passionately loved; and Winifred took his hand, and led him from the room.

"Come with me, my lord," she said. "This is no place for us now."

Suddenly she turned; and, running to the nursing Sister, took her two hands in hers, and drawing her towards her, gave her a sweet, long, thankful kiss.

"You will remain here for a time, I know," she said.

The Sister silently nodded, and returned the kiss, which seemed to add some warmth to her life.

"And you, doctor"—Winifred spoke in a whisper, as we do in the presence of the newly dead; as if Death, still lingering over his victim, could hear us, and might be reminded of our presence, and would strike us too—"And you, doctor, will you come with us?"

The doctor had done all that humanity could accomplish, and now said that he was ready. The nursing Sister smoothed the face of the dead, and closed the eyes, which were clouded now; opened the window, placed a vase of flowers before an image of the Saviour which stood upon the dressing-table; and, kneeling down before that simple and temporary altar, offered up a prayer—not for herself, but for the soul that had so lately escaped from its prison of the flesh.

CHAPTER L.

"O miseras hominum mentes, O pectora cæca!" sayeth Lucretius. "Often, when we seek the right, do we stumble on the wrong; and, contrariwise, as we grasp the wrong, we peradventure only happen upon the right."—*Similitudes by John Pawlet*, p. 29.

By what an admirable law of nature it is that we associate ourselves with success, and congratulate ourselves upon it, even when another has achieved it; and disassociate ourselves from defeat in the quickest and most satisfactory manner!

"Ah!" said Inspector Stevenson, looking at the defeated Brownjohn. "Your case has broken down, Mr Samuel. *That* horse won't run."

"Been scratched long ago, to *my* mind," returned the person addressed. "And no wonder. There are always two ends to a long pole, and I got hold of the wrong one. That's all."

"You did what you had to do very well indeed," said Tom Forster, who did not feel any triumph at the humiliation of his rival; "and no man could do more."

"Thank you, sir—proud, I'm sure," said the police sergeant, taking the proffered hand, and shaking it. For Brownjohn, like a good honest fellow, generously admired his rival; and having lost the race, put up with the loss, and felt no deep regret. He had done his best—that was all he could do.

"I hope," he continued, "that your system will turn out better than mine. I don't do any fancy work. I look for my clue, and I hold on to it. I get to where it leads me—and it is nowhere. Now, with you it may be otherwise. You have a way with you that will"——

"Lead to nothing too, very probably," said the old man. "If murderers were men of talent instead of being the stupidest fools on earth, if crime were wisdom instead of folly, why, they would baffle us utterly. And there is something in this that we have not got to the bottom of, by any means."

"No?" asked Brownjohn, willing to be instructed, and half asking a question.

"I have felt so, at any rate," returned Old Daylight; "and I feel so more than ever to-day. Why, bless you, none of us are sure of a criminal, even if caught red-handed, till he confesses his crime."

As he said these words, Mr Inspector Stevenson, who had gone into another room, after whispering to the magistrate, opened the door, and produced César Negretti and his little companion, Patsy Quelch. Patsy seemed to have grown an inch taller. There was a gleam of triumph in his blue Irish eye—a quick, sharp, wakeful look, and a bold bearing about the boy, as if his hour had come. César, on the other hand, had lost all his variable lightness and agility, and seemed to have collapsed. The prospect even of a couple of months'

imprisonment had a terrible significance to the Maltese. Let him but once get into the hands of the police, and when should he escape? Such were his thoughts. He had a natural horror of all guardians of the laws, as may have been observed in others who choose to break through them.

"Who are these, Mr Inspector?" asked the magistrate.

"Please, your worship," answered that officer, "we thought at first it was something very small. Only a larceny case—spoon-stealing from a coffeehouse."

"It is that!" interjected Patsy, in a quick, shrill whisper, which thrilled through the room, and made César start nervously.

"Miserable pig!" muttered the Italian, between his teeth. "Wretch—Irish—misbegotten one, had it not been for thee"——

Patsy's triumphant look silenced him, and Patsy himself was frowned into quietude by the Inspector. But he—with that curious patience often exhibited by persons who love revenge—could wait. The objurgations of the Maltese, whispered or shouted, fell like peas upon sheet iron, and left no mark nor hurt. Mr Horton, by a courteous gesture, invited Mr Tom Forster to the table in this preliminary investigation, and the bundle of the Maltese was silently examined. Mr César Negretti was one of those individuals—not uncommonly met with—who are not by any means deterred nor confounded by the wickedness of a deed, but who are appalled by detection. Standing first on one leg and then on the other, his miserable body screwed up into as small a space as it could well occupy, he had lost all his gracefulness, and looked as contemptible an object as could be conceived. The perpetration of crime, or the indulgence in low passions, is not conducive to good and noble looks; and a gallery of criminals may well be called a "Chamber of Horrors." The bright olive complexion of the Maltese assumed a green-yellowish hue; his eyes had lost their brightness and their sparkling vivacity. His fisherman's scarlet cap he had pulled off, and it hung dangling from his hand; while limp ringlets of his black hair straggled over his face, which was covered with perspiration. Once or twice he tried to assume an indifferent air, and even a sickly smile; but

in those moments—to the eyes of Patsy, which were fixed on him—he looked somewhat more contemptible than before. As for Mr Tom Forster, he was taken by surprise. The spoons were of silver, and bore a half worn-out crest, which he at once recognised as the same as those bore which he had found at Acacia Villa. They did not carry the English, but the French, Hall-mark, and were of foreign manufacture. Mr Forster, who had had some experience in these matters—as related in an early chapter of this history—pointed this out to Mr Horton. But besides these evidences, there were some light kid gloves—soiled, indeed, and crumpled and worn, but not so dirty as those which such a person as Negretti would have worn, nor were they of the kind which he would have purchased. They must, therefore, have been stolen by or given to him. Some other nick-nacks, a letter or so in French, one or two in an Italian patois used in Malta, and some letters in English, made up the other contents of the bundle; with the exception of a shirt of fine texture, and a black kerseymere waistcoat. The magistrate examined these, and then spoke—

"These are not all your clothes?"

"Yes, yes, signor; most honourable sir, yes," replied the Maltese, partly in Italian, with painful eagerness. Then he added, with a sigh of some satisfaction—"With the exception of those I have now got on."

"Yer lie," muttered Patsy to himself; but he did not speak aloud this time.

"But what have you done with the others, my poor lad?" asked the magistrate, in a tone of kindly pity—evidently grieved, as he always was, at the guilt of others, especially of the young.

"I—I changed them for these where I went with Mr Brownjohn."

He looked pleadingly at that stolid officer.

"He did so," said the police sergeant, accenting the last word. "He had a notion, I think, your worship, of getting beyond seas; but I kept my eye upon him, and he dressed himself up in this nautical way at a slop shop."

Here Mr Tom Forster, bending respectfully down, whispered something in the magistrate's ear. Mr Horton nodded, and said—

"But a young fellow like you must have some other property. Where did you leave your trunk or chest?"

"I have none. I have sold it."

Mr Horton looked puzzled and displeased; and Patsy fidgeted, and held up his hand as a schoolboy at a Sunday-school does, when he feels, rightly or wrongly, that he can answer a question.

"Umph!" ejaculated the inspector, noticing it; "the boy wants to speak, your worship."

"Let him speak up," said Mr Horton, glancing in a kind and encouraging way upon the small boy.

Hereon Patsy spoke.

"Please, he has been and left a box at the café in Rupert Street. I know it, and I see'd it. The padrone, as he called the master, will show it."

"Very good," returned the magistrate. "Do you know where that place is, Serjeant Brownjohn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take a cab, and go and search the box. And now let us look to these letters."

The dates of the papers found in the parcel—during the reading of which César Negretti turned visibly more pale, and exhibited more distress — extended over some six months. The first in order was a rough draft of a letter to Mr Edgar Wade, barrister, of the Temple, in which the writer acquainted that gentleman that he knew something which would, if examined and acted upon, turn to his advantage. It was purposely worded in a wide and indefinite manner, and seemed to have elicited a careful answer from the barrister. This answer did not occur; but there was another rough draft of a reply to the letter, in which the writer stated that, in overlooking some letters of his (the writer's) father—who was Gustave ——, formerly valet to Lord Chesterton—he had discovered the secret of Edgar Wade's birth. A third letter—and the little bundle of MSS. had been carefully and consecutively arranged, and had been preserved as being of some value—was from Mr Edgar Wade himself. He wished the informant would call upon him: such matters as he could communicate had better be spoken than written. He appointed a certain evening, and

wished that the writer of the letters would bring with him proofs of the authenticity of his information. A fourth letter —again from Edgar Wade—complained that the appointment had not been kept, and asked—evidently in answer to some hints upon the subject of remuneration—what amount of money would be demanded, presuming the information supplied should turn out to be of use in placing the writer, Mr Edgar Wade, in possession of his rights. Mr Horton looked significantly at Mr Tom Forster as he read these letters. That gentleman fidgeted with his spectacles, examined the writing of his friend with coolness and minuteness, and was evidently troubled. The letters were quite genuine; and as each succeeding one strengthened the revelation so unpleasant to Mr Forster's feelings, so his examination became more slow and methodical. It would seem to have been Negretti's purpose to keep away as long as he could from a personal interview with the barrister. Some more brief notes of a letter next occurred, in which were found the names of Gustave, Madame Martin—with her address at Acacia Villa—and Lord Chesterton. Lord Wimpole, in whose service the writer had been, was also mentioned; and the secret to be confided was held up as of the greatest importance and value. There was no answer to this. Edgar Wade, it would appear, had sought out and found his informant; and, from notes of conversations, a large sum of money seemed to have been asked, and to have been agreed upon, as a reward to be paid upon Edgar Wade making his claim perfect. There were instructions, evidently taken from the barrister's lips, as to getting papers in the possession of Lord Wimpole or Madame Martin. As Mr Tom Forster read these, his heart sank within him. He turned pale, felt sick at heart, and sat down, polishing his eye-glasses with his bandana pocket-handkerchief.

"This case assumes a very serious aspect," said the magistrate, looking at him. "I am afraid, Mr Forster, that your accumulation of proofs in regard to Lord Wimpole have misled us."

"The proofs were all right, sir," returned Old Daylight in a mild voice; "but I am afraid they have led us to the wrong person."

"I see no reason why his lordship should not be released," said the magistrate, making out an order to that effect, and directing it to Captain Chessman. "Perhaps Inspector Stevenson will see to this!"

He handed the paper to Stevenson, who took it gloomily. "Here was a go," he said to himself; "Old Daylight was actually breaking down! What next? When would the right party turn up?"

"No," observed Old Forster, after a pause, "your worship was right in your unwillingness to make that arrest. There are yet more papers—possibly, in that man's box."

"Have you any more letters like or similar to these?" said Mr Horton.

César's lips moved faintly with the reply of—"*Si, signor.*"

"Most of these notes are in your writing, I presume. We can prove that, even if you deny it. I want you to be cautious about what you say. It is evident that you know much about matters antecedent to the murder of this poor woman"——

Again a low, hissing sound of "*Si, signor,*" a bowing down of the head, and a "piteous"—as old writers would say—extension of the hands and fingers, as if for mercy.

"If not of murder itself," continued the magistrate.

César's head fell upon his chest, and he said nothing. But the eyes of the silent, watchful little Irish boy gleamed and sparkled with intelligence.

"Have mercy, sir, upon me—spare me, good sir!" gasped the Maltese. "Give me time. Let me consult my friends, and I will tell all."

The words sounded more like the low whining of a beaten dog than the voice—once so clear, sharp, and resonant—of César Negretti.

"You shall have plenty of time and every opportunity," said the magistrate. "We will see you properly taken care of and go fully into the case to-morrow."

César and Patsy were therefore removed; and, after some talk with Old Daylight in regard to Mr Edgar Wade—for whose appearance Tom Forster himself undertook to answer, being supplied with the proper instrument for compelling his

attendance—Mr Horton left. As Forster passed Sergeant Brownjohn, that functionary said—

"Well, I am as sorry as if it were my own case. Yours seems to break down as well as mine, although you were on the right track."

"Ah! my friend," said Old Daylight, with a sigh, "it was a race between us. One of Two, you know. And, as far as I see, I have the right evidence; and you, although you did not intend it, have arrested the right man."

He nodded in the direction in which César Negretti had disappeared as he spoke.

CHAPTER LI.

A LAST INTERVIEW.

THE nursing Sister, left alone with the dead, put up her prayers in silence, and with some faith and hope—both deadened by custom, both now a matter of habit. The fire which had kindled them in her young breast had ceased to leap into a golden flame, but had fallen to its steady, customary glow—even covered with white ashes of disappointment, and concealed by custom and routine, but yet alive and burning. Did she pity or envy the poor lady who was at rest? Hardly one or the other feeling was expressed in the calm, tender kiss she bestowed on the forehead of the dead, as she smoothed the features and composed the limbs. Even the dead was of the world; and the Sister's Church was far above and beyond the world, looking on it, acting on it, working for it, but not of it. Poor world, when such noble and good souls are constrained to leave it! Poor wounded souls, who leave the world, and look askance at it, and live to themselves, transformed to something hardly human, yet ever hungering for human love and sympathy. The little doctor, who had cut the Gordian knot of the ravelled Churches and sects by believing in nothing that would not admit of scientific proof, was not forgetful of the Sister—for whom he would have liked to prescribe a good dance, plenty of roast beef and Southdown

mutton, an honest husband, and a small family—and had sent some one to relieve her in due time; but, in the meantime, she must wait—and she was used to waiting. She heard the footsteps of Edgar Wade, as he now and then rose and paced about in the little room overhead—which he had fitted as an extra study; and then there would ensue a long interval of silence. It was evident that the acute lawyer and man of the world suffered much perturbation; and, of a truth, the remark of a modern philosopher, which would apply here, is consolatory to us small persons, who cannot but feel some envy at the thick-skinned people, who are supposed to suffer nothing. "The sages," wrote this clever man, "feel as much as we do; only, by an assumed constancy, they hide their feelings from the world." The barrister was a sage after the philosopher's own heart. He had hidden his feelings from the world; but, nevertheless, he felt. He went straight to this little room after parting from Mrs Wade, and, raising his hands to his hot forehead, remained for a short time the picture of despair. Things were not going with him as he could have wished; troubles were closing around him; and the stout heart and busy brain were both over-worked and over-charged.

"What will happen, I know not," said the young man to himself. "At any rate, let me prepare for the worst. My letter has not been answered. What can she mean? Months ago—is it months or weeks?—she vowed that she loved me, and that it was only my poverty that was an obstacle; and now, when all seems——But come, I must work—for a time, at least."

He sat down, and wrote rapidly, yet carefully, pausing now and then to read the folios which he filled, and taking care to use precise and definite expressions. Occasionally he would pause and listen, and wonder to himself in some such phrases as these—

"That man Richards, I suppose, did it. He has always some new-fangled invention which is to astonish the world, and then falls to nothing. I wish I had not brought him here. I wonder what ill-luck it was that made me do so. I was a madman. Her tongue may undo much that is done. Why was it not silent in the grave? Poor thing! that was the

best place for her. I wonder why and for what some people live? Providence! As if Providence ever troubled itself about such wretched worms as we are. She must die; she cannot surely exist as she is. How like a ghost she looked, if there are such things as ghosts."

Then he continued writing, and would again listen. His hearing was very acute; and he distinguished the retreating footsteps of the Earl, Winifred, and the doctor. But he had some pages to fill, and he set himself resolutely to his task. When it was finished, he packed up the papers, and carefully wrapped them in a quarto sheet of writing paper; sealed, directed, and then pocketed them.

"They will be," he said, "safer with me than any one else. And now—now for the last appeal!" He laughed bitterly to himself. "How few people would suspect me of this folly! But I suppose it is in my blood. I should be a slave to such a passion, when I consider what my parents were; and this passion masters me!"

"There is only one kind of love," said the great philosopher before quoted; "but there are a thousand different imitations of it." And he adds that many people talk about love, but few ever know that passion. Perhaps it is as well they do not. Husbands and wives who are very fond of each other, go through life very well on the imitation. Similarity of tastes, an equal level of wisdom or stupidity, habit, convenience, a nice position, a title, a good house, a fine income, an old name—all these pass for love. But they are not love, notwithstanding. People have got so used to the imitation, that they are quite angry if they ever meet with the original. One young gentleman, in whom the true passion had really begun to burn, seized his mistress's hand, and kissed it fondly.

"My dear George," said the nymph, as she passed her kerchief over her hand, and drew on her glove, "pray, don't be so ridiculous."

Cupid took flight for ever. Our playwrights and novelists do not even attempt to describe love, and are poor hands at lovemaking, or else Shakespeare and the Elizabethan poets knew nothing about it. We are, no doubt, very clever, but we cannot yet beat Shakespeare; and he happens to be borne out

by a cloud of witnesses. Amidst the numerous passions—ambition, envy, savage indignation, overweening conceit of his own merit—that burned in the bosom of Edgar Wade, one pure and true passion had managed to establish itself; and its object was, by some mischance, Natalie Fifine!

"Once more," he muttered to himself, "I will see her once more! Alas, why is my soul so ill at ease?"

He went down-stairs to his chamber, which was next door to Mrs Wade's, and taking from the chiffonier a bottle, filled a wine glass full of brandy, and drank it. The draught seemed to do him good, and he took another. At any other time this might have intoxicated him; but now the draught only served to make his nerves steady, and to give him determination. He reached the door of the room wherein poor Mrs Wade lay, very still and quiet now—as we shall all once lie—and would have passed it; but a sensation, which he could neither account for nor control, made him enter the room to gaze upon the dead. He did not *know* that she was dead, but he *felt* it. The silence, where there had been the sound of voices, might have told it; but that of itself was by no means a proof. Edgar Wade was not astonished, when he opened the door, to see the face of the dead covered with a white handkerchief, and the Sister kneeling at her temporary altar. With a terrible calmness, he approached the bed, and lifted the face-cloth, and gazed for a moment fixedly at the face of the dead. The Sister arose from her knees, and looked at him, with a meek astonishment upon her features.

"*She* is at least at rest," he said, in answer to that questioning face.

"She is, poor creature!" answered the nurse; "and, pray Heaven, in peace."

The features, so calm and placid, seemed to give a tacit answer to the prayer; and Edgar Wade, mechanically uttering a feeling which came upon him, said—

"And, after all, she looks as if she had died before her time."

"No!" returned the Sister, "no one does that. Her infelicity had years too many. Her sorrows seemed to be of longer duration than her life. All is ended now. It is for us to learn a lesson of patience from her days of sorrow."

Edgar Wade replaced the cloth; and he seemed again impelled to ask if Mrs Wade had said any more than she did when she had recognised him; and to his question, awkwardly put, the nursing Sister answered in the negative.

"She seemed to shield you. And I am sure she loved you still, and prayed for you."

The barrister's eyes emitted a softened light as he turned to the nursing Sister; but he said nothing, and turned round to leave the room.

"Oh, sir!" cried the *religieuse*, suddenly and with fervour, "if you have been guilty of injustice and harshness to this poor lady, accept her forgiveness, and soften your heart to her now she is dead. Repent what you have done amiss. We are all weak and erring. The presence of the dead should teach us to know ourselves. Cast out what is wrong in you, and try to live a new life." Never had the little woman before spoken so much to a man since she had entered the sisterhood. Hers was a passive life. It was her business to do and not to speak, to refrain her tongue, and to perform her daily acts of duty. She wondered at herself, after she had spoken so earnestly, raising the ivory cross which hung from her waist in her pale, thin hands as she spoke, and placing that emblem before her as a silent ambassador of good faith. The barrister said nothing, but held up one hand as if to deprecate further intercession, and passed the other over his burning forehead and weary eyes. Thus he left the room.

"They fool me," he said, bitterly, "to the top of my bent. They all run in the same groove. It is *I* that am in the wrong —it is *I* that have to repent. God help me! will no one put himself in my place?" He was very angry with the world, as most selfish people are, at intervals, during all their lives. He was not appreciated, and not sufficiently regarded, and never had been; and he had, by a long course of meditation, burned these facts in upon his brain. It was, therefore, in the same bitter humour that Edgar Wade again passed through the door that led into the mews, and summoned the stable-help to saddle his horse; mounted upon which, he was not long before he sought the house wherein she dwelt whom he loved more than any one else in the world. When the servant opened the

garden door, she was apparently inclined to dispute the passage of the barrister, since he led, as had been his wont, his horse across the footpath and into the garden, tying it to the verandah while he entered. But, at that time, there was that about Edgar Wade that did not permit of denial or questioning.

"Mademoiselle is not at home," said the servant—"not at home to any one."

"You mean to say that she *is* in the house, and will not see me!"

"Precisely, monsieur; that is her express command."

"Then I will see her," was the cool, calm answer, as the barrister entered the front door, and made straight to the little parlour.

Sounds of laughter were heard within—laughter from the lips of Natalie, chorused by the gruff voice of a gentleman, who seemed delighted by the exuberance of the faëry creature before him. Lord Montcastel had thrown his dice, and had been—indeed, was being—rewarded by the delight of the young creature whom he had promised to make his bride, and who held in her hand that promise, drawn up in a legal form. Natalie had just been mimicking the young men of the day, and assuring her lover—as other syrens have done before now, and will do again—that a good, sensible, middle-aged husband was the one to be chosen; and that the fops, beaux, and bloods of the day were not worth looking upon. In short, she was playing a fantasia upon that tune which is a favourite with middle-aged gentlemen, and which asserts with philosophic boldness that it is "better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave," when the door opened, and Edgar Wade stood before the pair. As the landscape seldom looks so beautiful as when we behold it for the last time, and as the treasure's worth somehow forces itself upon our minds just as we are about to lose it, so Mdlle. Fifine never looked so lovely to Edgar Wade as when he was about to lose her. His voice was deep with emotion as he stretched his arms towards her, and said—

"Natalie!"

She turned round to him, almost angry, but still brilliant and excited; and then, suddenly, she fled to Lord Montcastel,

as if to beg his protection, and whispered an assurance that this was one of the admirers that she had discarded for his lordship's sake. Whatever one may say about Fortune, she is a powerful goddess. It was Edgar's fate that whatever he did at this time should be undertaken at the worst possible occasion. He could not have come at a better hour or moment for Natalie—nor for his lordship.

"Who is this?" he asked, gently pushing aside the lady, and standing between her and the barrister.

"It is Monsieur Edgar Wade," she whispered—"one of them of whom I spoke. He is an *avocât*."

The Earl bowed stiffly towards the intruder, and asked what he wanted.

"I wish," said Edgar, humbly enough—though he naturally felt that he should have liked to throttle his opponent—"to speak a few words to that lady, and alone."

The Earl looked at Natalie, who shook her head and whispered—

"I cannot see him. I do not wish to speak to him. I have given orders that he was not to be admitted."

"You cannot do so, sir," said Lord Montcastel, acting as interpreter. "You see that your presence disturbs her. Anything you have to say must be said through me."

Edgar looked round the gaily furnished room, which his money had helped to make so bright and pleasant, and answered—

"I recognise you, my lord. I have met you before—once before, at the Opera. Might I ask by what right you interpose between us?"

"That is soon answered," said Montcastel, coarsely, as if dealing with an inferior. "You are learned in the law, by profession, I hear. I claim a legal right. This lady is, or will be soon, my wife!"

The blow struck. Mr Wade was for a moment dumb. At last he managed to speak.

"Is it so?" he cried. "Let me hear it from the lips of Natalie. Can it be so? Tell me."

"Milord speaks truly, and of good faith," she said, taking the Earl's arm, and looking proudly up to him. "I told your friend so, whom you sent—an old gentleman"—and here, by

a touch or two, she described Mr Tom Forster. "I told him to tell you to come here no more."

The barrister turned a deadly pale colour, and then, by a sudden rush, the blood came back. He seemed choking with passion.

"Natalie," he cried, "you know what you have done. You marry this man for his rank. Mine is higher than his. I, too, shall be an earl! I was working, striving for this and for you; and now, when all seems fair before us, you have cast me off. You have killed me!"

The tone he said this in was so full of despair, that it commanded some respect from the two worldlings who stood before him.

"Pray," said Montcastel, more politely, and even with more calmness than the intrusion seemed to warrant, but at the same time with a sneer—"Pray, may I ask what title you lay claim to when you come into your rights?"

"The earldom of Chesterton," answered the barrister, proudly—again white with sickness, hatred, and despair; and then he walked slowly, still looking at Natalie, from the room.

Out into the cold air—choking with passion, so that he loosened and tore off his heavy cravat, Edgar Wade hurriedly untied his horse's bridle, and led him forth. The cold, sharp, biting air—for it was a sharp and early frost—seemed for a moment to revive him. He pressed his heels to the sides of his horse, and galloped wildly away, the keen air cutting his bared neck like an icy knife; but he felt it not. The pair inside the little house listened to the retreating footfalls of the horse; and then the Earl, passing his arm round Natalie's waist, laughed noisily, but without mirth.

"There 's one poor devil out of the lot that you 've sent mad, Natalie! The earldom of Chesterton!—why, his lordship is alive—as good a life as mine, too—and has a son who will succeed him. Mad—poor devil!—mad as a March hare."

CHAPTER LII.

"Ye barren lawyers, bring your evidence,
Join link to link, and stretch out line by line;
Like cunning spiders, spin out their own slime
To catch their prey, ere they do suck his blood."
—*The Tempter*, act ii. sc. v.

Poor human nature, over which the philosopher meditated, and into one or two of whose secrets he had penetrated, was sometimes too many for him; and in this case she furnished him with an instance in which he was defeated. Each single instance in the evidence he had so closely fitted to the person of Lord Wimpole, Old Daylight found might equally well fit another person, and that person was——

Well, he did not like to think over it. Unlike most persons of restricted and narrow affections—who, when they minimise their love for the world, lessen it also even to those few upon whom they do bestow it—Mr Forster loved those whom he did love with a steady, quiet, deep affection, which grew the stronger under difficulties, and flourished—like the British Government—beneath the blows of a strong Opposition. Thus, even while Edgar Wade was so bitter against the poor invalid who lay at his house, Tom Forster loved her more fondly than ever; and when, in his turn, Edgar himself began to be covered with the thick cloud of suspicion, the poor old gentleman cursed the day when he first took up with his hobby, and blamed his unlucky stars that ever he came to visit Kensal-Green or its neighbourhood. That day, which was so full of events to Mr Tom Forster and all concerned, was followed by a night not less eventful. When the old gentleman got home, revolving many things in his mind, he found the poor invalid dead, the nursing sister gone away, and replaced by some one who watched, and paid the last sad offices to the poor dead lady; and the room arranged with crucifix and candles, and that unmistakable atmosphere pervading it—felt at no other time, and not to be passed by—which is inseparable from the room wherein lies the newly dead. The old man did not

know all that had passed between Mrs Wade and the barrister at the last interview; and, moreover, as the reader knows, was strongly impressed with belief in all that he had said. He thought that—moved and urged beyond her strength—the poor lady had yielded to temptation. But as she lay there dead, all his old respect and love came back, and she was forgiven.

"Poor thing," he thought, "if there be penance in the decrees of Heaven, her life was one long penance for her sins. How calmly she lies now! Who would not forgive her? What was her life but a trial and a punishment? Is not all life the same?"

The tears were rolling down the deeply-lined face of Old Forster as he said this, and they continued to fall as he walked slowly down-stairs, and sat down in his easy chair.

"I shall wait," he said to himself, "till this unhappy man comes home. What is life? Is it worth having? After all, is it not a game of chess against a superior player, the after-conduct of which depends upon the first moves which he makes?"

"There's old Robert Owen—a fantastic old fellow," he continued to himself, "wanting men and women to live after one model, and all to dress alike, in pink flannel garments, like the Noah's ark men and women we buy at a toy shop. And he says, in his new gospel, that man is the creature of circumstances, over which he has no control. If I thought that were true, I would sell this London house, and go and live with his people in New Lanark—and I might as well."

Here he walked a while up and down, took out his heavy leathern pocket-book, looked at the little legal instrument with which it was furnished, and felt very much as if he should like to put it in the fire. But he was restrained by the respect he felt for English law, and for other reasons too.

"After all," he muttered, "it had better come from my hands; and then —— He will hate me for ever after; and yet I would rather break it to him. Why not? Why should he not hate an old fool like I am, who has certainly done no good by poking his nose into the business of other people?

"It's about all over with me," continued Old Daylight.

"This is the one grand mistake I have made; and that mistake is a knock-down blow. I am too old to recover it. 'I went up like a rocket,' as Dr M'Phie has it, in Rolt's paper, 'and I come down like a stick.' That's what I do."

To comfort himself, Old Daylight mixed a glass of that which teetotallers call "alcoholic poison." Happily, he lived in the days before teetotalism became rampant, and had not even a suspicion that he was doing an evil thing; on the contrary, he felt refreshed, and somewhat renovated; but the events of the day weighed upon him, and he knew not where to turn for comfort. So he sat down in his easy chair—one which modern luxury, by the way, would deem uncomfortable—and read some pages of Shakespeare for a consolation. He sat there a long time. His candles burnt lower and lower; and Edgar Wade did not return. He summoned his housekeeper, and from that astute lady learned as much as he could from anybody as to the very moment when the Earl of Chesterton and a lady had called, how long they had remained, and almost what had passed in their presence. But, as we have seen, the dying lady spake in so low a tone, that the most acute listener in the vast and well-built old house could have learnt but little; and Mr Forster felt that, to do her justice, the housekeeper told all that she knew, and that it was rather her misfortune than her fault that she knew no more.

"And Mr Edgar Wade—was he present when the poor lady died?"

"I think not, sir; he went into the room while the nurse was yet there, but some time after the sad affair."

"Sad affair!" muttered Forster. "That is one way to mention it. Happy release, I should call it. And did he stay long in the house afterwards?"

"No. He came down-stairs at once, and went through the garden into the stables, where he keeps his horse."

"I see. That will do. You can go to bed. I will wait up for him."

The housekeeper, subdued and quiet, as most servants are when there is a death in the house, went away, nothing loath. She had thought much more of her master since a real Earl had called there, taking a pleasure in "carriage company,"

and feeling somewhat exalted by the fact. Still, she was perpetually haunted by her master's mysterious business, and, being unable to penetrate the mystery, put her worst construction on it. She passed into the room furtively almost, and on tiptoe, where the watcher sat, and the dead lay with the candles burning; and, nothing afraid, expressed herself delighted that all was "nice and comfortable," and then stole up to bed. Old Daylight placed his bandana on his head, and settled himself in his chair, and in due time fell asleep. He had taken the precaution to put the chain of the door up, so that his friend and *protégé* could not enter without awaking him. In some hours he awoke cold and chilly. The rushlight he had taken the precaution to set light to had burnt—in the sulky, sullen manner peculiar to those nearly extinct luminaries—almost to its socket, and was throwing from its position the pattern of its pierced tin guard, in little dim round holes of light, not only on the floor, but on the ceiling.

"God bless me!" ejaculated the old man. "Why, I *must* have been asleep."

How is it that we assure ourselves thus apologetically of any slight dereliction of duty? Old Forster had been asleep, and to his own satisfaction. He felt cold and chilly; and rubbing and chafing his hands, he lighted a candle, and went to the street door. The chain was still up; no one had passed through; and the old gentleman—undetermined and dissatisfied as we always are when we have been watching, and are disappointed—opened the door and looked out. The morning was cold and very dark. Queen Anne Street looked even more dull than it did on ordinary occasions. Round the corner, in the next street, and at some distance, the watchman—not yet disused, and kept up as a monument of parochial charity as well as of ornament, or principally for the reason that the parish really did not know what else to do with the poor, old, used-up specimen of humanity—was calling out, "Half-past four of a frosty morning;" and Old Forster listened to the "linked *weakness*, long drawn out," of the old fellow's cry till he felt chilled. He shut the door, drew the bolts, and came in and sat down for a moment, to think.

"Why, he can't have come in," said he to himself. "He can't have come in."

He repeated this obvious fact once or twice to himself, as if he were assured of its truth by repetition. Then he suddenly recollected that, as Edgar Wade went out by the stable-yard, he might have returned thereby; but, no—the bolts were drawn. The old gentleman, to reassure himself, went up into the barrister's rooms. They were empty. The bed had not been slept in. The light shone through the keyhole of the door where the dead lady lay; and Old Daylight shuddered with cold, and with a deadening and perplexing feeling, as he came down-stairs.

"Umph!" he said to himself, as he prepared to undress, and to go to bed. "I did not expect this. He has fled the country, I hope. What for? What for?"

The phantom before him, the guilt of Edgar Wade, began to build itself up as he lay down to rest, and kept him awake. At first he had thought that any knowledge the barrister had of the matter, even after he had examined the letters found in César Negretti's bundle, was but little; but now—now, in this supreme moment, why was he absent? Surely the man was—if ambitious and impatient—too clever to criminate *himself.* Old Daylight endeavoured to comfort himself with this thought; but a horrid suspicion, that made his blood run cold, told him that he might be wrong. His faith in poor human nature fell to the lowest degree on the scale—when, happily for himself, he fell into a sound sleep, and did not wake till late in the morning. Dressing and shaving, breakfasting or opening his letters, Mr Forster was haunted with but one idea, and that was—of the whereabouts of the barrister. Hardly had he breakfasted, when a messenger from the police court put a note into his hand, written in the familiar and noble Roman caligraphy of Inspector Stevenson, begging him to come down at once, as something unexampled in the case before them had turned up. Stevenson—faithful to his friend—hinted that he wanted him to know it before the magistrate had it placed before him. It needs not to be said that Mr Forster hurried to the office now so familiar to the reader, nor that he was received by Stevenson with an official coolness and dryness peculiar to that officer, who was all the while excited by the news, and as eager to get to the bottom of it as himself.

"Come here," said Stevenson—"here is an old acquaintance of ours," and he led him to the spare room in which Patsy Quelch and César Negretti met with Mr Brownjohn the night before; and in this room—not much the worse for the night he had passed, with the exception that his coat looked a little more fluffy, and his hair somewhat rougher—sat Mr Barnett Slammers, and his friend Mr Scorem. That ornament of the law was rather the worse for his vigil; his bright, merry eyes looked somewhat larger, and a dark ring round each told of excitement and night watching.

"Hallo! Mr Slammers," cried Old Forster, "can you throw any light upon this mystery?"

"I can't. But I think this gentleman can," returned the reporter, laying a kindly hand on the clerk's shoulder.

"And of what kind?" asked the old gentleman, eagerly looking at the Inspector, in whose face he read a confirmation of the words that dropped from the lips of Mr Slammers.

"This gentleman," said Mr Slammers—here again he laid his hand upon Scorem, who kept a very strict silence, and, in consequence of his legal education, determined not to speak unless spoken to—"this gentleman will, I think, furnish you with the missing link in the chain of evidence with regard to the terrible crime in the neighbourhood of Kensal-Green."

Mr Slammers used a great many words; but it was not to be wondered at, as his profession led him to indulge in a surplusage when he used his pen, and his tongue had caught it from that instrument of a ready writer.

"Well," returned Old Forster, "we are glad to hear anything, Mr Slammers; and due justice shall be done to you for putting this before the law."

"Oh! I've nothing to do with it," returned the reporter. "This gentleman does it all—*suâ sponte*, as they say in the classics; and, let me tell you, he does it at great cost to his feelings; and not only to them, but to his position and prospects in life, which by this action will be for ever blighted."

The breath of Mr Scorem gave evidence of his feelings during this speech: it came and went more quickly than before, and the bright eyes seemed to glow the brighter in that shadowed room, as the honest Bohemian put his case forward. Mr

Slammers was evidently determined that Scorem should not lose by it, if *he* could help it.

"Very gratifying, I am sure," answered the Bow Street runner; "very much so. And now, what is to be shown us?"

"This!" said Scorem, dramatically, producing the end of the foil, the broken part of which was ground to a chisel end, and was very sharp.

"God bless me!" returned Old Daylight; "that's a Solingen blade, and just the length to fit the broken foil I took from Lord Wimpole's room."

"Just so!" uttered the Inspector.

"And where did you find this important piece of evidence?"

"Concealed between the boards in his master's chambers, evidently hidden away with a purpose, as such a weapon could not well be thrown away, nor easily destroyed."

Thus spoke Slammers, who knew how to marshal evidence as well as the cleverest barrister at the Old Bailey bar.

"God bless me!" exclaimed Old Daylight, looking at Scorem with a confused notion of having seen him before, but having, from his agitation and the novelty of the place, forgotten him. "And who is your master?"

Mr Scorem answered the direct question with a voice altered and made solemn with emotion—

"Mr Edgar Wade, Barrister-at-Law, Garden Court, Temple."

CHAPTER LIII.

"Oh, do not think
Because you are so rich and highly born,
And so wrapt round with comfort, you can 'scape
The penalties of Being, more than we;
You breathe the air, and so do we. The poor
Have blood, and bone, and passion just as you,
And love their kind as dearly as my Lord."

—*The Bondmaid*, act i. sc. i.

THE old French sailor, as he walked away from the English police-office, quietly crossed himself in his humbly pious fashion, and thanked *le bon Dieu* for His good offices. For, although

in his hard life, Le Père Martin had been assailed by many ugly doubts, and had had to listen to many insinuations from his wife, who was an *esprit fort*—as our attentive readers will, no doubt, remember—he never allowed himself to be conquered, but kept up an invincible and dull belief in Providence; which belief his better half regarded in much the same light as her great hero Napoleon had looked upon those stupid English soldiers who did not know when they were beaten. Upon such an occasion as this, Madame Martin would have asked her husband why it was that Providence did not interfere *before* he was wrongfully taken up to London, and why Providence subjected him to certain misfortunes merely for the purpose of getting him out of them? To which sophistications the old Norman fisherman would answer with a deprecatory shake of his head, and an assertion that, after all, *le bon Dieu* knew a great deal better than he did, and that if He chose to try him, he was willing to be tried. This simple kind of faith, which pretends to know nothing, and relies neither upon logic, nor upon science, nor upon learning, but upon itself, is a very obstinate one to overcome, and is frequently found amongst soldiers and sailors, especially amongst those who are obliged to execute orders of which they only see the result long afterwards, or are exposed, as a seafaring man is, to daily dangers from which he is day by day extricated. In Sterne's picture of Uncle Toby, we find that humourist shows us, with a subtle pathos hardly appreciated, that Toby only finds out how he got his wound, and what dangers he had run, by studying the maps of the fortifications as he lay upon his back, weakened and in pain. So it was with Le Père Martin: he was content to map out the past, and to understand his troubles as he looked back. It need not be said that this childish faith was Père Martin's great source of happiness, and that he knew that well: hence that curious soft smile of his, which puzzled Mr Brownjohn, and gave him the notion that that old fellow "Marton was a confounded hypocrite." Released, just in the nick of time, by the appearance of Mr Jasper Snape and the bargee, Mr Martin readily paid his thanks where they were due, and walked off as cool as a cucumber.

"That's a curious old man," said Brownjohn to himself.

"He beats all I ever come across. He makes no bones of it; just as if he kept a special Providence to interfere on purpose!"

The old gentleman, in the meantime, had walked away, and was quietly surveying the streets, and about to get himself some dinner at one of the early coffee-houses—where they sold, by the way, a decoction of roast corn, and some most delectable saloop—when some heavy steps moving quickly after him caused him to turn round. He saw Brownjohn, who held in his hand a tiny parcel of white paper.

"You want me again, Mr Officer?" said the old Frenchman, turning back, and evidently quite ready to accompany him.

"Bless the man," said the runner to himself, "he must be as fond of the police-office as a cat is of her kitchen fender. No, Mr Martin, we don't want you now," he said aloud; "only Mr Horton, who is a *real* gentleman, he is"—Mr Brownjohn made the not uncommon distinction between a real gentleman and a sham one—"has sent you this to help you on your way."

The little parcel contained two sovereigns, one of which was from the magistrate's private purse; and Mr Martin received the gift with the same calmness, just as if he had always been looking for it, and was not in the least surprised at the lucky windfall. He was, however, profuse in his thanks.

"You English are a generous people—with your money. I suppose it is because you get it so easily," he muttered to himself, as he went onwards.

The sentiment would have outraged Mr Brownjohn, or any Englishman. To be told that one earns his money easily is a slight never to be forgotten. After dining somewhat substantially upon eggs and bacon, coffee, and bread and butter—it must be remembered that the hardy fisherman had fasted for several hours—M. Martin paid his shot, asked the way to Chesterton House, and departed in the same independent, simple way, causing the tired-out, greasy, and unkempt woman, who had a constant odour of coffee, chicory, brown sugar, and buttered muffins, to look out of her den with a face of wonder as the man departed. She was so seldom seen outside this caravanserai in the London deserts, that directly her head was seen, a street boy gave a war-whoop of delight—a *chi-huick*, he

called it—which announced that old Mother Potter was to be seen, as well as a "furrineer." But having no companions in his excitement, the wanderer returned discomfited, took up his basket of wood, and went on what he called his "harrand." M. Martin soon found out the way, walking through the broad squares, and sunny, clean, and gravelled streets—for the West-end of London in those days resembled a very clean and well-built provincial town, and was not soiled with blacks and smuts as it now is—as a modern Caractacus might do through a modern Rome. He did not, however, give way to any of those reflections which the hero of the early history of Britain is said to have indulged in. When he reached the gate-house of the Chestertons, the proud young porter admitted him without question; being far too much absorbed at the present dishevelled state of the family to say harsh things to any one. Mr Checketts, too, who had wandered to the lodge gate, merely to have a talk with the porter—being in that miserably dislocated state which a masterless servant so soon drops into, if he be at all active—looked upon the advent of this strange party as something which might bring that "turn-up" which we all look for in the time of trouble.

"Yes, sir," said the porter, respectfully. "Who might you want to see?"

"The Lord Chesterton. Does he live here?" said the old fisherman, looking round the plain yet stately and well-ordered courtyard.

"Well, he does do that," said Mr Checketts, coming forward, and attracted by the foreign accent and aspect. "And you might want to see him? Wouldn't anybody else do?"

No; he must see him himself. And Le Père Martin sat down upon the well-polished painted bench outside the door of the little lodge, whereon the porter sunned himself upon warm days.

"He seems a determined sort of fellow—he must be important," thought Checketts. Then he said, "I'll see to this, Mr Thomas; I've got nothin' else to do, worse luck. Come along with me, sir."

Le Père Martin would rather remain where he was, till "me-lord" sent for him. He would sit there; he liked being

in the fresh air better than in great houses. Thereon, questioned by Checketts, he gave his name ; and that excellent servant bounded away, perfectly certain that "something had turned up." The garrulous old seaman had but time to talk over the weather, and the probability of some few and short storms before the winter set in, when Checketts came bounding back, and most respectfully urged the foreign gentleman at once to see his lordship. Such was the magic of his name! Upon this the seaman rose and walked towards the house, as if admiring the architecture of the Burlington period—cool and collected, as if master of the situation. He went up the staircase, his cap in his hand, considering rather than wondering at the noble proportions of the building, and leisurely stopping on the landing to contemplate one of the full-length portraits, with an almost comical air of satisfaction. He had spent so long at his dinner, and had walked so leisurely about the town, that it was evening when he stood in the corridor which led to Lord Chesterton's room. Mr Checketts bade him wait there for a moment ; and knocking softly at the door, entered. The Earl and Winifred had returned from the death-bed of Mrs Wade, and were sitting together. Events seemed to crowd upon them, and the old nobleman looked weary and jaded. He had rested his worn head upon his hand, as if for reflection; and said nothing—did not even raise his head—when the servant entered.

"Please, my lord, here is the foreign gentleman."

"Let him come in. Winifred, my dear," he said, softly, "I want to see this man *alone*. You would help me if you could —I don't think you can in this case."

He dreaded going over the story of his wrongdoings before this innocent young lady, although much of the story was known to her ; and she, without divining his intention—nor, indeed, even permitting herself to try to do so—left him at once by another door, and gained the boudoir, filled with those curious volumes of religious literature to which the reader has been before admitted. Le Père Martin entered. The old nobleman rose, and politely pointed out to the fisherman the chair which Mr Checketts had placed for him before softly retiring and closing the door.

"Now, M. Martin," said his lordship, eagerly, "will you tell me what brings you here? We have never met before."

"We have never met before," returned the old Frenchman, coolly, as if in no hurry to begin his story.

He looked round the room, lighted with two wax candles—so well furnished, so comfortable; presenting such a contrast to his French cottage, or to the close cabin or wet and slippery deck of his boat. The two old men did not present a stronger contrast; and, strange to say, the advantage was on the side of the peasant-born fisherman. He was healthier, more erect, more ruddy, stouter, and fuller of life than the nobleman, who, to all appearance, had passed a much easier, or what the world would call a happier, life. Something of a comparison passed in the Père Martin's busy brain; much the same thought occupied that of Lord Chesterton. But in addition to this thought came the reflection—"and if I look back!" That was the trouble—in looking back. The Earl felt that the simple fisherman had the advantage. There were few years of life before either of them. Behind one were many struggles and hardships conquered and passed by; before him a trust in *le bon Dieu*, and a wish—half begotten of lassitude—to be at rest. Before Lord Chesterton, regret for a misused past, doubt and dread for the future, and a troublesome entanglement in the present.

"We have never met before, milord," said Martin, "but we are not unknown to each other—you a grand seigneur, and I a poor fisherman; you with your palace, I with my poor boat. *Le bon Dieu* gives us different parts to play in life; and we do not care much when the play is over."

"I know your name well. You were the husband to one who was a nurse of my son's."

"Exactly so—of one of your sons, my lord; that is what I would speak about. My wife, Estelle, who performed all you wanted, lived separately from me, in England. She has been suddenly murdered; and at a moment, too, as I gather—for I have kept my ears open—when her evidence would have been of some importance. They have accused me of the murder, and brought me up to this large city, where I have proved my innocence."

"Why did they accuse you?" asked the Earl, eagerly.

"Because I was last seen at her house, and therefore suspected."

"You know where she lived?"

"Certainly. Poor Estelle! she was hard and cruel to me; but she was the mother of my son, who is in France; and when a woman has been one's wife, we don't lose sight of her, somehow, even if she has troubled us. She found that it was necessary, now and then, to help me, to assure my silence."

"Then you visited her recently?" asked the Earl, anxiously.

"Most certainly. I had business with her."

"Of what nature?"

"Well, milord," replied the fisherman, "that is a curious question. It was necessary for a poor man to see the mother of his child, and you ask him—proud as *vous autres* are—why he is there? What would you say if one of us put the same question to you? But that is the way with you great people. We little ones cannot live without your interference. And yet we might do so, surely. I have never troubled your house before; but you have brought misery and desolation on mine."

The Earl hung his head, and said, plaintively—

"My friend, you are right. My one sin has, alas! led me into many others. Alas! we cannot do a wrong thing but it is multiplied a thousandfold in various ways."

"It is too true," returned the old fisherman, philosophically; "and no doubt it is for our good. *Le bon Dieu* has made it so. Everything bears fruit and multiplies. Sin has also its seeds, which fly abroad and grow up like the thistles of the fields. But I am not come here to tell you this. I am come here to help you, and to make you help me."

"I will do it willingly, my poor man, to repair the misery I have caused you."

"That was well said," returned the fisherman. "*Le bon Dieu* asks no more. Even a priest will tell you that. Poor Estelle refused me any help for my son, who wishes to marry. You will give a few hundred francs for the poor young people, whose life will be one of labour."

"A happy life!" said the Earl, parenthetically.

"Not always," returned the fisherman. "But you will do

what I said? I see it in your face. You will give him a few francs—a hundred?"

"A thousand, my good man. Is that all? I had hoped"—here the Earl let his head fall upon his hands, sadly. After all, what could this man do for him?

"Thank you—thank you," replied Le Père Martin, gratefully. "I felt it would be so. My son is now cared for. If there was any bit of property Estelle left, milord"—

"My lawyer shall look to it. Justice shall be done to you."

"Again, thanks. We dealt formerly with your gentleman, Gustave. He is dead. I had rather deal with you. It is so with the great, in this cruel world. Perhaps 'tis so up in Heaven. I, too, approach *le bon Dieu*"—here he crossed himself—"more at ease with myself than through others." Then the fisherman rose, and was about to depart. "I will take milord's word," he said, undoubtingly. "I will call to-morrow." He stood at the door, twirling his cap. Then he said, slowly—"You are rich, milord; great, but unhappy. Estelle Martin had a secret from me; but I had one from her. *Now*, it belongs to you. Am I to tell you what it is?"

CHAPTER LIV.

PERE MARTIN'S STORY: WHEREIN THE TRICKER IS TRICKED.

THE same half-cunning, quiet look of power and of deep meaning—so simple, yet so puzzling—which had attracted the notice of the Bow Street runner, passed over the face of the Père Martin as he spoke the words—"I have a secret, too, *from her.*" He was, in truth, pleased with it. His nature, which might have been more bold and straightforward had he been born in a different sphere, had in it some of

> "That low cunning which in fools supplies,
> And amply, too, the want of being wise."

And Père Martin was certainly not above using this to his own advantage. Do not good men often do so? Are not men, confessedly conscientious and religious, very tenacious of their own gains and their own rights? And especially this tenacity

is to be noticed in those born in a subordinate sphere, and who believe that fortune has not treated them too generously. The old fisherman could not probably quote chapter and verse for it, but he was well aware what spoiling the Egyptians meant. And here was an Egyptian, of high rank in life, who had spoiled him pretty considerably, as he thought; and now it was his turn. Lord Chesterton—dulled and blunted by misfortune and grief—hardly comprehended the words uttered; and it needed the curious, half-unwilling manner, the bashful delay of one about to make a bargain, exhibited by the old seaman, to rouse him.

"You have a story, then?"

"Yes, milord, a curious one."

"In which your late wife is concerned, as I take it?"

"My late wife," uttered the old mariner, casting up his eyes, and thinking of her with something like affection. "Yes, she is dead—my poor Estelle!"

"She did not seem to regard you with much affection," said Lord Chesterton. "She lived apart from you. Had you quarrelled?"

"No. Something came between us, milord—as you well know."

"I know nothing," replied the peer. "What should I know? I wanted a nurse for my child—not a very uncommon want—and Gustave, my valet, provided me with one. That is all that I know about it. If you have anything to say—if you have any claim upon me—come in, and sit down."

Nothing loath, Le Père Martin walked again to his seat, and sat down—smoothing his hair, and listening to what the nobleman had to say.

"It was an unhappy business," continued the last speaker—"a very unhappy business. I can see it all now by the after-light of experience. That is how we are able to see things in the truest light."

"You have reason," returned the old seaman. "I remember a good priest in his sermon, who told us that experience was like the stern-lanterns of a vessel, that threw a light upon the waves she had passed over."

"Too late, too late," said the old lord, catching at the simile;

"and Heaven knows what lost treasures may lie beneath the waves. But, now, what have you to say? Let me know, and I will give you a draft for that which I have promised you, and for what is due to you."

M. Martin's eyes twinkled at this, but he did not hasten to disburden himself. He wished to be prolix, and to speak of his own troubles. He had all his life longed for an opportunity of speaking his mind to the aristocrat who had plagued him.

"I said something came between me and Estelle. It was *you*."

"*I*—well, well, have your reproach! But cannot you see, man, that if your wife was willing to be hired as a nurse, Gustave was as free to choose her as any one else?"

"Nevertheless, monseigneur, it was you, and the accursed thirst for gold that poor Estelle had—that all women have. They love gold—do they not? when they will sell their children's food for it, warm from their own bosom—or themselves!"

The old man spoke so bitterly and fiercely, that Lord Chesterton was silent for a moment. Then he said—

"God help her! she is dead!"

"Dead—and how?" cried Père Martin. "If she had been true to me, and had remained with me, she would have been alive now, a hardy fisher's wife—firm as a rock, as I am."

He rose as he said this, and stood a contrast, indeed, to the bowed and fragile nobleman at his side.

"They are such cowards, they who love gold! They fear the winds, and the sea, and the air, and a free and rough life; and they love luxury and ease. Look at us, milord; which of us is the better man? I don't boast," continued the fisherman, as his companion said nothing. "I only wish my poor Estelle could hear this, and see us now. It would have silenced her gibing tongue. She would have believed me; perhaps you might have told her."

"I would have told her," said the nobleman, humbly, "that you who labour for your bread honestly and hardly, spend the better and the happier lives."

"And yet she," ejaculated the ancient mariner, "would never believe me. I am glad that monseigneur thinks so—I am

glad that I am proved right, though she is dead, poor thing! She did not know all. She was delighted when she had to nurse the child of a great man—and despised her own husband and her offspring; and you see what has come of it. You rich people will have much to answer for!"

"Enough, enough, sir," cried Lord Chesterton, irritated beyond endurance. "You must settle your business with my servant, if"——

"Not so, monseigneur. What I have to say belongs to you. What I have to tell concerns you—and me, alone. It is worth listening to."

Again the old nobleman sat down, a picture of patient despair. Le Père Martin determined to keep him as long on the tenterhooks of expectation as he could, and intimated that he was somewhat thirsty; upon which his lordship rang, and put before him such claret as the seaman had never tasted. Having signified his approbation, the old man of the sea, with cautious gesture and lowered voice, proceeded with his story

"My poor Estelle, as I said, was led away by a love of money. As I could not get enough for her with my boat and my industries, she determined to help herself in the best way she could; and she met in M. Gustave, a *coquin, un vilain homme.*"

"We know all that," said the old nobleman, with impatience. "She entered readily into his service, and became nurse to my son."

"To one of your sons, monseigneur. And to serve you well. as I take it, and at a good price—though I touched none of the money—she was prepared to do a wrong and ignoble deed: to change one child for another!"

Lord Chesterton started. "You knew it all!" he cried, "Then you consented; and part of this villainy was yours. Why do you elevate yourself thus above me?"

"Softy, softly, milord. You were the rich tempter. We were the poor people with whom nothing went well. We were so poor that we were not even allowed to see our accomplices in the crime. We never had the honour of meeting with your lordship. We, poor and humble instruments, were not good enough for that."

"You were to know nothing of it. I had given orders that

you should be saved from the guilt of co-operation. The secret was to be confined to your wife alone."

"Man proposes, but *le bon Dieu* disposes," said Old Martin, piously, quoting Thomas à Kempis, and believing that he repeated a phrase from Scripture, for he crossed himself. "You see, Estelle was a woman, although no ordinary one; and, in her pride at earning so much money, she told me one day, as she was nursing your pretty boy-baby—and a beautiful child it was, though of course I loved my own much more—of the proposal made by Gustave, and of the plot entered upon to ensure its success. You must remember it all, my lord?" asked the old man, with a somewhat malicious pleasure, as he saw that the narration was telling upon his lordship's feelings most severely. In spite of the assurance of his companion that all the mean details of the plot were fully known to him, Mr Martin troubled his ears with the same story with which the reader has already been made acquainted. At last Lord Chesterton spoke—quickly, almost angrily, save that his spirit was too much cowed by misfortune.

"Oh, man, man, do you think that we have no trouble—that our life is all pleasure, because we are rich—or that yours is all trial, because it is poor? I tell you that, day after day, I have envied the quiet workers in the fields, and their still slumbers earned by exercise. Speak no more of this. You say you have a secret, and one that your wife knew not of. Do you want money for it? Speak, and if it is worth gold, you shall have its worth, if it ruin me. But do not torture me with this long narration, and this bitter suspense."

To old Martin's credit, this appeal touched him. He had so long contemplated the feelings and the business of the great ones from his own credulous and simple view, that it was quite a revelation that they could feel as bitterly as he could.

"No, milord," he said, rising and drawing himself up, "I do not want more gold. You will give my son what you said—it will be enough. I can labour on. The sea is my mine, whence I draw my riches. And now, listen. Estelle and Monsieur Gustave were two cunning ones. They had their plot—I had mine; and in it I was strengthened by some letters that I saw from the lady in Paris *then*—the mother of the poor little foster-child. She was unwilling to aid in the plot. She

besought—and even bribed with money—Estelle to help her, and to be honest and true to the other child, your son and heir.

"But, my lord, put yourself in my place. How could I contrive to help the good people, and to deceive the bad ones? It was a deep-laid plot, as you well know, The two children, each resembling the other—as most children do when very young—could scarcely be distinguished. They were to be clothed exactly alike—not a garment, not a stitch different; in fact, our babe was dressed in clothes procured by Gustave. We were to meet the nurse with the little child in a cabaret, and there the change was to be effected."

"I know—I know it all—it was the plot of the devil; it was a lie, a foul lie in action, and every lie is a hiltless sword, that cuts the hand of him who uses it. This one has pierced my heart."

The bitterness of the Earl's tone touched his companion's heart, and he hastened on with his story.

"Do not despair, my lord; all may be well. I meditated how to frustrate these cunning ones—how to distinguish and to remember the child. There was not a mark upon him—the poor thing was without outward spot. What was I to do? But, suddenly, I had a happy thought. Surely *le bon Dieu* put it into my head. In the morning, before the child was dressed for the great event, I said I would relieve Estelle of it, and take it out for a walk by the sea-shore. It was then that, taking out my knife—though it made my heart beat and bleed to do it—I cut away a little, deep, round piece of skin and flesh upon the bone of its left ankle—the outside bone. The child scarcely cried. The cut was deep and sudden. I then stanched the blood with sea-weed, and bathed it with the salt waves; and, when all was well, I filled the deep little wound first with wet gunpowder, and afterwards with white flour. Estelle, scolding me for being so long away, seized the child when I came back, and, scolding me for a fool, dressed it in the clothes she had. She never noticed the tiny wound."

"And then—what then?" cried his lordship.

"What then? why, as luck would have it—whether through carelessness, or a double change, or a mischance—we had the same babe back with us."

"Gracious heaven! Will you swear this?"

"Not only swear it, but prove it," said the sailor, stoutly. "My head was sore enough from the blow dealt to me in the cabaret, but I was content. The two cunning ones were not deep enough for me, a simple fisherman!

"'See, Guillaume!' cries madame—my wife. 'See! the babe does not know the difference of its nurse! Look how it chuckles and crows! So much for loving their mother! But foster-children, I suppose, are different.'

"'You have made some blunder, Estelle,' said the simple fisherman—*c'etait moi*, milord—rubbing his head.

"'Bah!' she cried. 'You will never have an ounce of brains to spare. I can see the difference. Besides, look at its little stocking! Do you see that spot of blood? The careless nurse has knocked it somehow; for my babe had not spot nor speck.'

"'Peste!' I cried—opening my eyes, 'it is so!'"

"Then, Heaven be praised! my son is indeed my son," cried the nobleman.

And then he fell back in his chair, and put up his mental prayers for the help of Heaven. Was not that child now lying under the accusation of murder?

CHAPTER LV.

WHAT WAS FOUND AT GARDEN COURT.

MRS GOUGER sat by her own little fire in the basement of one of those Inns of Court which, by the grace of Providence and the forbearance of a long-suffering world, have been permitted for many hundred years to nurse successive generations of barristers. The prospect opened up by this reflection—with the fact, rendered patent from statistics, that there are at least four or five generations in each century of members of the long robe, which rise to eminence, flourish, and then die—is so vast and so portentous, that I leave it in all its ghastly bareness to the reader's imagination. No man can do full justice to it. We have heard of deep and reflective persons who could not walk through an Inn of Court without a creeping of the flesh; not occasioned by the visible and tangible presence of anything

which might have been supposed to attack them, but from saddened reflections on the wickedness of human nature. But these people had been—either in themselves, or in their parents or relations—clients who had lost their suits. Such humorous creatures, saddened and yet not unapt to indulge in a pensive smile, remark that the pun to be made on a Chancery suit and a suit of clothes is painfully subtle and searching; that if you lose one you generally lose the other, too; and the highest wisdom was not ill employed when it advised the client whose coat was attached to give up his cloak also—*i.e.*, to leave the whole of his suit in the lawyers' hands, and to flee naked to the wilderness. But we must not trouble the reader with such sick fancies. The gloom, melancholy, and dirt—the general unkempt and dishevelled appearance to be observed in all chambers of the Inns of Court—deepens as it goes lower down, and is very deep indeed at the basement story. Some young musical or literary fellow with a wife may live in the smaller Inns at the top rooms, and make them natty and clean; but, as a rule—from the "swell" chambers of the man who does not practise, but who ate his dinners and put on the gown and wig merely for position, to the busy first floor, occupied by the great Blatherwick, K.C., who has the ear of the court, and can terrify an ordinary jury in ten minutes—all the rooms were, at the time we write, wanting in cleanliness, and might be called "fluffy." It might also have been noticed that the laundresses either never cleaned the windows, or that the occupants of the chambers chose to keep them dirty and blackened—"loving," said those who had lost suits, "darkness rather than light, because their *deeds* are evil." Mrs Gouger was the lady who attended to Mr Edgar Wade's chambers, and whom the good-natured Mr Scorem was so willing to help. She was quite ready to let any one help her—being, as she said, but a "poor creetur," and never making an effort to be otherwise. The gloom which had settled all over Garden Court, and which was put down by Mrs Gouger to that "beastly rivver, and its confoundered fogs, drat 'em," became thicker and thicker that morning, and covered in its kindly cloak so many of the shortcomings of London, that men as they walked to business, and groped their way east of Temple Bar, were quite sociable with each other; and not only patronised the boys

with links, but laughed at their drolleries. These young fellows—lowering their torches, and beating them against lamp-posts or their own feet, so as to produce a sudden flare—would dance forward, and dance round such of the passers-by as they could catch; and if unsuccessful in being hired, would playfully drop a few aspersions of melted tar on their clothes, and disappear like will-o'-the-wisps in the darkness. In Mrs Gouger's apartments, which were never very light, an Egyptian darkness had set in—relieved, indeed, and set off by the ruddy glow of her morning fire, supplied and kept bright by sundry cribbings of coal from the chambers of the gentlemen above. The laundress was a thin, spare woman, with one eye; and the clerks and other occupants of the chambers who were privileged to know her, had a legend that she had lost this eye by the American practice of "gouging," so that she ought rather to have borne a passive than an active name. The "poor creetur" sat enjoying her breakfast, rather late in the foggy morning on which Old Daylight was called to the police court; and little dreaming of the after-events of the day—for a more peaceful existence than hers could hardly be imagined. It was only in the early mornings and late evenings that she was at all busy—coming out, like an owl, between the lights, and doing what she had to do in a subdued and dazy manner, as if she could not be induced to make an effort. The morning, which had been fine and open, suddenly grew dark—even on the north side of Oxford Street; but, towards the "confoundered river"—to quote Mrs Gouger—the London atmosphere made up its mind suddenly, as it sometimes will do, to produce one of those unparalleled London fogs, the like of which is not to be witnessed anywhere else, and of which the natives are, not unreasonably, proud. As soon as Mr Scorem had announced himself as the clerk of the barrister, Edgar Wade, Mr Forster, whose worst fears were confirmed, led the Inspector aside, and took a sudden resolution. All hope of his *protégé's* innocence had melted away as quickly as the fog had arisen, and before Old Daylight there was only one path—that of his duty.

"When was this foil-blade found?" he asked.

"Only two days ago. I could not make out what it had been used for, nor how it came there," continued the clerk. But it was evident he was haunted with a presentiment and a suspicion.

"Mr Wade lives at my house," said the old Bow Street runner; "and he has not been home last night. We have one here who is supposed to be connected with him upon this matter."

The matter alluded to was the death of Estelle Martin, the narration of which had roused Mr Scorem's suspicions."

"Do you know anything of him? He's called César Negretti."

Mr Scorem was familiar with the name. He had been sent by Mr Wade to make some inquiries, and with some letters which he did not care to trust to the twopenny post. Again Old Daylight turned aside to consult with the Inspector; and the result was that he, with Mr Scorem, hurried off to the Temple to find whether Edgar Wade had passed the night there, and if there were other evidence. Through the darkening fog which lay heavy upon Covent Garden and the Strand, and appeared to have settled in a fond partiality on Soho and Newgate Market; through the courts which ran from the "Acre," as Scorem called it, into Covent Garden, and which were as dark as Erebus, Mr Tom Forster and the nimble clerk, followed at a short distance by the reporter, hurried. It was of no use to take a hackney coach, as these denizens of London were too well used to the intricacies of the great city not to know that, by many short cuts and devious turnings cleverly taken advantage of, they could more readily reach the Temple than by coach. Down Bow Street into the Strand, through Temple Bar and Middle Temple Lane, half strangled by the fog, the owner of the Hessian boots hurried with his merry men; and passing through an atmosphere which, looking towards the river, resembled the deep yellow glass one sometimes sees in the conservatory doors of humble suburban residences, they soon tripped down the circular stone steps which lead to Garden Court, and stood before the barrister's door.

"Hold! stay a minute," said Forster, recovering his breath; "let us see what we are to do. Let us behave like gentlemen. You go up, Mr Scorem, and see if he be there; if so, let us know by tapping at your window, as you arrange your desk."

"I!—no. I won't betray him that way. He was my master, and a good one, although"——

"Never mind; he must come out this way, and a few minutes do not matter. Thank Heaven for this fog—he will be spared any humiliation."

"Yes, it *is* a good job, is it not?—that's something to be thankful for!" said Scorem. "Well, it is no use waiting down here. I will go up, and you can follow."

So Scorem, with a quickened pulsation, walked up-stairs carefully and sedately; even arranging his hair, and pulling down his waistcoat, to look a little fresh and natty. But he did not leave his companions for long. Mr Forster, leaning against the door-sides, upon which the name of Mr Edgar Wade flourished with many others, was thinking how that would have to be painted out, and another would take its place; and Mr Slammers had barely time to adjust his respiration, and wipe his hot brow, when Scorem bounded down-stairs again, and stood before them. He looked very white indeed.

"What is it?" asked the old man, catching the infection of fear. "Is he there?"

"I don't know," returned the clerk, almost angrily. "How should I know? The oak's sported, as they say at college—fast locked."

"Well, then, what's your fear?"

"Well, if he is not there, he's been—that's all. I left both doors shut, but the inner one's open. I can see through the letter-slip into the room."

"Can you see any one?"

"No!—that's where it is," said Scorem, trembling. "There's a form"——

"Dash it, man!" cried Slammers, "I see what it is! He's been home during the night here, and poisoned himself, perhaps! I know the sort of thing. Here—where are the keys of that outer door?—some one has them!"

Then it was that, dashing down into the basement, Scorem fled, shouting, "Mrs Gouger! Mrs Gouger! Where are your keys, woman?"

In his energy, he forgot his politeness.

"Drat it," said Mrs Gouger, who had dozed after her breakfast, and in the midst of the fog—"drat it! don't miscall a poor creetur! You are energetical, *you* are."

"Keys!" said Scorem, breathlessly—looking wildly as if he could wring them from the laundress; and feeling every moment in which she fumbled for the master-key as if it were an age.

Happily, she found it; and, urged by curiosity, followed the clerk to the first floor. The two companions of Scorem were there before him. The door was opened, and the three crept in silently, through the fog—silently into the room; where, sure enough, even in the darkness they could notice that a darker form was there, and that a gloomier presence added to the gloom. How and by what means the eye of Scorem had managed to rake the apartment, or whether it was only his imagination that had drawn the picture, it was never known; but there, surely enough, was a form seated in the barrister's chair, and leaning forward over the worn black leather covered desk upon which he had so often written.

"He is worn out," said old Tom Forster, with a slow, despairing voice—"and is asleep."

"Asleep!" cried Barnett Slammers. "Here, I know something about these cases—having seen enough, God knows! Has he been dead long?—that's the question."

He pushed Tom Forster aside, and put his arm under the recumbent figure, to feel the heart of the barrister—which was once so proud, so ambitious, so eager in its love of the world. But the reporter did not ascertain if the heart were cold or warm, or whether it yet beat, or merely fluttered as it died; but, taking away his hand as if something had stung him, cried—

'What's this? Is it ink? Here, bring a light—a light?"

Scorem ran into another office, and came back with the double candlestick and flaring tallow candles used by gentlemen of the law; and, as Slammers held up his hand, they saw that it was dabbled in dark blood.

"There is no hope," said the reporter, calmly. "That blood is as cold as ice—that's why I thought it was ink. Here, give me the light this way."

Old Forster trembled too much to do or say much; but he looked on at the actors in the strange scene, murmuring to himself, "He is not dead! he can't be dead!" Then, again, he said, "It is well so, if he were guilty; but surely he was free from that."

They raised the tall, handsome form. The face, pale as

marble, looked more hard and clever than even in life. The hair, damp and dank, clustered in heavy curls upon the forehead; the brow was damp with the dew of death; the eyes closed, as if in sleep; the mouth half open, and partly full of blood, which had flowed over the desk and table, and lay in a heavy pool on the floor.

"Dead! Dead as Queen Anne!" said the reporter. "You must send for a doctor, before you have him removed. And then"——

"Take him home, poor boy—and lay him by the poor lady who so loved him. He *lives*—good God, that I should say it! —he lived with me."

"You see how it is. He has been wandering out in the cold without his cravat. Look here!" Slammers pointed to the bare neck, some part of it stained with blood. "And there is no wound anywhere. In his dread and agony he has burst a blood-vessel: happy in that, that it has saved him from worse fate!"

"There may yet be a chance," said Old Daylight, the tears gathering in his eyes as he placed his hands within the dead man's bosom, to feel if there were but a spark of life. But there was none. "Why, what is this?"

He detached, as he said it, from the neck of Edgar Wade a black riband, wetted with his blood, to which was attached a locket, on which was engraved the word, "Natalie."

"She was his ruin," said the old man.

"And what 's this?" asked Mr Slammers, picking up a packet of papers from the desk, and reading the inscription by the candle—"To Mr Tom Forster; for him and the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterton."

"Give them to me," cried Old Daylight.

The doctor came—cool, calm as an iceberg; a man of business; pale, ready to direct.

"The table; take away papers; lay it out so. Dead for hours—rupture of one of the large vessels—heavy congestion —deep emotion, agitation, worry. Strip it. No wound—healthy condition—fine chest for so sedentary a man—no marks on body. Hey! curious—on the left ankle, a little deep blue spot, about the size of a pea: looks as if it were a tattoo mark. Mrs Gouger, you say, is your name? You had better

clean this up. You are in charge of the chambers? Yes—a clean sheet or two: let it be there still. Close the shutters—yes. Proper officers: won't like it in an Inn of Court. Take necessary steps to have it removed, after it has been viewed. All right. I'm of no use here now."

CHAPTER LVI.

IN WHICH THE READER FINDS OUT WHO WAS THE "ONE OF TWO."

WITH many varying moods upon his handsome face, with eloquence in his quick and fervid tongue, with expression in every graceful action and position into which his body fell—now standing like an antique statue of an orator pleading for the right, now as an imploring and a guilty creature—now as a Faun, listening and terrified—now with hope, and anon with a bitter anguish and despair, César Negretti pleaded before the magistrate, and made a clean breast of it.

"He knew Madame Martin. Yes; he had known her for some time. Was aware of her connection with the Chesterton family. Had visited her house with a letter from milord. Was employed as servant to Lord Wimpole. Had been guilty, or was supposed to have been guilty, of peculation there—at Chesterton House. Nothing had been proved against him. Was guilty of indiscretion only. Something found in his possession: Mr Brownjohn knew all about it. Would say no more upon that, having an important revelation to make.

"Who was he? Was the son, he believed—in fact, knew—of M. Gustave, the confidential valet to his lordship. His father had him educated, and he was taken and placed as a clerk to a merchant in Malta. Knew many people there. Lived like a gentleman. Had seen his father when he travelled abroad with my lord. Also knew Le Père Martin, who more than once came to the island in his boat to trade. Martin had brought him money from his father.

"Had quarrelled with his employer, the merchant. Loved pleasure, and was idle, as most young men in their land were. Loved the warm climate and the blue sea; so different from the cold seas of the north.

"When his father died, he (Negretti) had the property left to him transmitted by his lordship, with a letter and a packet of papers, which had, of course, been untouched by his honourable lordship.

"Had lived then as a gentleman, in Spain, in Italy, and in Paris; until his money, in two years, had melted away. Had gambled—perhaps not more than other young gentlemen fond of pleasure and of seeing the world."

During the few words he said concerning this time, Negretti stood up boldly, as if he recalled it with something akin to pleasure and pride. Then he gave a touching account of his poverty, and his many trials in Paris. When he had money, he had not dared to embark in trade, although he had many good offers. "All on the island," he said, "are rogues and cheats." It was peculiar to this creature to asperse everybody, and to represent himself as a harmless person, afraid of every one else, and a prey to all surrounding him. Mr Horton listened with suppressed disgust, and with some admiration too, to the various interjectionary slanders upon humanity that the eloquent young fellow threw out.

"Well, but come to the point."

"He would do so, learned sir; but it was necessary to understand his position. Alone and almost starving, he remembered his father's letters; and one evening sat in his miserable lodging to look them over. Amongst others, he found one or two very important to my lord."

Armed with these, he made his way over to England, and found out Lord Chesterton. But although César did not directly say so, it would seem that he had no need to use these letters. He was received with kindness, pitied, and given a place of confidence—in fact, was made valet to Lord Wimpole at once. The letters then seemed to have disappeared for some time. César was installed in his place; and soon, with his usual tact and skill, made himself master of his situation. During the time he was there—as Mr Horton divined from one or two questions which, in his eagerness to exculpate himself and to serve justice, Negretti answered with a forward carelessness—he had employed himself in piecing together the story which the letters disclosed, and which he but half knew. To a man of his dissimulation and subtle intellect, all was very

easy: he learned enough to make his knowledge dangerous. He visited Madame Martin more than once, on his own account; and, although he had learnt little from her, that little was enough. The Widow Martin, as she called herself, did not like the foreign valet; and it was certain that he did not like her. She was not generous, he said, and very cunning; whence Mr Horton, rightly or wrongly, presumed that he had failed to make his market there. He was well treated, and liberally paid, at Chesterton House; but the service was irksome. And his fatal itch for gambling, in order to retrieve the money he had lost, kept him poor and in want. The rogues and cunning ones at Malta were bad enough, as he well knew; but of all rogues he had found, none were equal to those—of every nation, and of Jewish or Christian faith—who were to be found near the Haymarket, and "there—*la bas!*" Here César—like injured innocence—pointed definitely enough towards Soho.

"His ill-luck prevailed. Nobody ever was so unlucky as he was. He was the very sport of fortune. One day, when he had lost all the money that had been paid him, and for which he had worked and toiled so hardly, he was tempted to borrow something belonging to his lordship to raise money on—that was all, upon his honour—upon his soul!"

"That will do," said Mr Horton, "go on with your story."

It would seem, then, that the letters were tried upon Lord Wimpole—or a threat, or hint at something the valet knew concerning the family; and that—most indignantly—all César Negretti's proffered information was rejected; and that the attempt was sufficient to bar his return to the house. That rejection was the cause of all the subsequent evil and trouble. César tried various occupations and methods of earning a living—as a teacher of languages, even as a waiter at that Hotel for Strangers where the reader first met him; but his usual ill-luck pursued him everywhere. Then it was that the mysterious bundle of letters was again resorted to; and this time on another person was their effect tried—on Mr Edgar Wade, whose paternity César then first made known to him. It is useless to follow this man in his narrative. The letters were submitted to the barrister; the plausible story was made out; and Edgar Wade was caught in the springe set by the clever Maltese.

"And then, monseigneur," said Negretti, piteously, "then,

when I had shown him all, this Monsieur Wade—a man *aigre*, strong, clever, full of vengeance—took his purpose daily in his hand. He would have me to find out Madame Martin's secret. She had letters, of course. They must be looked to. What were they? 'We must,' he said, 'look well to our proofs—I am the heir of Lord Chesterton!'

"What would you? I was weak in the hands of that lawyer. I saw that if I did not what he wished, that I should perish. He was wise, able, strong, and determined."

The face of the Maltese changed to a marble paleness, as he leaned forward to tell his story. This was the point in which all were most interested; and it was about this period of his confession that Old Daylight—a subdued and broken man—walked into court, with some papers in his hand.

"It was upon me that the duty of finding out all these papers was thrust. Oh, sir, I feared that man, and I went forward to act for him. I went, then, to Madame Martin's, on the evening of the 29th of September. It was quite dark."

"Were you by yourself?"

"Yes, quite so—that is, I entered the house, and left it by myself."

"The man is going to tell the truth," thought the magistrate.

"Monseigneur"—here the Maltese was very plaintive—"I entered the house, having tapped gently at the door, and it was opened by madame. She was about to burn those letters in a fire she had made for cooking, for she expected Mr Edgar Wade; and I was imploring her earnestly to spare them, when she was suddenly struck down from behind with a deadly weapon—part of a foil or a stiletto; the letters were snatched away; and when I looked up, penetrated with horror, I saw my master—the clever man, the barrister—Edgar Wade! Oh, pity me, sir! Look at me, poor, helpless, possibly foolish; but *not* guilty!"

Here the young fellow dropped into such an abject form of supplication, at once so beautiful and touching, that even Brownjohn nearly pitied him. Old Daylight, bending forward to the magistrate, whispered something; and Mr Horton asked a question.

"I am curious to know," he said, "very curious to know, whether the poor woman uttered a cry or not?"

César was puzzled; he was a man who fancied that in every question he saw a snare.

"Your honour, sir," he said, piteously, "I was so horrified that I could hardly say."

Mr Horton looked blank at this; and Negretti quickly corrected himself.

"Yes, I well remember. She fell silently, without one sound—killed at once, as skilfully as if a brigand's hand had struck her."

"She was quite silent, then?"

"*Si, signor*—yes, sir, upon my oath."

"Yer lie!" shrieked Patsy, springing up suddenly, and beginning to pour out a torrent of words which it was of no use trying to stop.

When the testimony of this young gentleman was reduced to writing, after Patsy had been properly sworn, it came to this—that he, Patsy, suspecting something wrong, and grievously hating the Italian for his ill-usage and abuse, had followed him carefully on the evening in question; had seen him dress himself like a gentleman going to a party, with light gloves; saw him leap the garden fence, tap at the shutters, enter the door; and in about ten minutes he, Patsy, drawing near, had heard a piercing scream. Not until five or ten minutes afterwards did he hear—wondering and fearful in his waiting—the horse of Edgar Wade; who, riding up, fastened his bridle to the post of a deserted cattle-shed, and entered the house by the gate and the open door. After some time—short enough—Negretti ran out, white and terrified. Patsy had drawn aside under the shadow of a small outhouse, and saw the Italian pocket some white articles, as if of silver, and then, looking carefully round, fly across the fields. Trembling and alarmed, Patsy waited; and then, closing the door carefully after him, the gentleman came forth, and looking on either side, unfastened his horse, and leading him for some time on the side of the road, so that his footfalls should not be heard, at last he mounted, and galloped away. Patsy himself got back somehow to Soho before the Italian, who knew not that he had been watched. With a shriek, an imprecation, hearty and deep—and then a prayer, yet more deep and hearty—César stood up, a model of incorrupt virtue, and called Heaven to witness that all this story was one net of lies.

"Wait, man—be still, will you not? This gentleman has something to say."

Old Forster rose, never lifting his eyes—without the slightest approach to his former secure certainty—with sadness in his tone, and almost despair in his manner.

"The words of the last witness were entirely corroborated by the last paper—the confession, he might call it, of Edgar Wade, Esq., barrister-at-law." And Old Daylight read the passages which bore on the adventures of that night:—

"I had come with a determination to take from this woman, Martin, all evidences of my birth. I disbelieved the vows of Madame Wade. I fully believed that I was wronged. By wrong and force I was prepared to do myself right; but I was indeed punished. I had to meet Negretti—the man who had first roused my suspicions—at nine o'clock, before the house. When I came there, I found him already rifling the body of the woman whom he had murdered. He turned suddenly on me, as I stood stupefied and appalled, and placed the very weapon by which the woman had been slain in my hands.

"Maddened by the sight, I hid this about me. It will be found beneath the carpet of this room, if search be made. I found I was the victim of this man. He swore that it was for me that he had committed this crime; he implored me to save him and to let him go. He told me that there were important letters all over the house, in secret places, and that alone could we be safe by carrying out the proofs of my identity; and that, in the struggle to obtain these proofs, he had slain her. That we stood equally guilty in the eyes of the law—that the murderer was *one of two.*

"That he had met me by appointment *here.* Of this appointment, the letter was in his house at home. What was I to do? Caught in my own net; poor, without aid: to persist in my course was my only chance of gaining riches, of preserving life. The law listens to the suitor whose hand is armed with the sword of gold. I let the wretched man flee away, and set myself—with the dead woman in the house—to search for proofs of my cause.

"I found too many: I found letters from Madame Wade begging this woman to forego the plot; thanking her that, in her opinion—for so she had been led to believe, and for *that* she

had rewarded the woman Martin—the plot was frustrated, and the child of the Countess had not been wronged."

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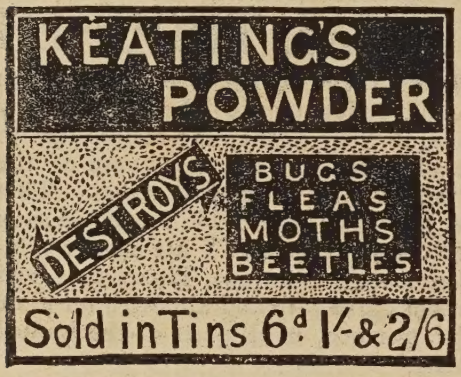

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